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59th year of publication

Human rights groups call for intervention in Sudan genocide

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Harry der Nederlanden

Despite several weeks of warnings from agencies working in Sudan, despite "never again" speeches made on the anniversary of the Rwanda genocide, and despite the recent attention of mainline media, the plight of the black peoples in Darfur, the western part of Sudan, continues to deteriorate. The *New York Times* recently called it a "slow-motion genocide."

After sending a delegation in mid-May to the war-torn African nation, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) has warned of a "genocide in the making." The ecumenical church group said the situation in Sudan resembles that of Rwanda 10 years ago.

Bush and Powell have both condemned what has been happening in Sudan with the connivance of the central government of Sudan, but have not gone beyond words. Kofi Annan has spoken out, but the U.N. has taken no action; in fact, it hasn't even uttered any condemnations. (On the contrary, U.N. members recently elected Sudan to the Human Rights Commission.) Neither has the organization of Arab states spoken out, nor the organization of African states. Neither has NATO or the European Union taken any action.

The Arab government in the north has launched a war against the people of Darfur, who are largely Muslim but black, by arming and assisting Arab militias in what the U.N. coordinator for Sudan calls "an organized campaign to rid an area of a group of people." Government-backed militias are engaged in systematic pillage, arson, rape and murder. In recent months, more than 10,000 people have been killed, over 130,000 have fled to neighboring Chad, and nearly one million have been forced to flee their villages and been turned into internal refugees (BBC).

Janjawid raze entire villages

"Three times more people have died over the last 20 years of war in Sudan than were murdered in Rwanda," wrote Anthony Lake and John Prendergast in the *NY Times* (May 20). "Most of those deaths have occurred in the south, where populations of African descent follow Christianity and traditional religions. And 400,000 more African Muslim Sudanese from the west of the country may well die by December in a famine created by the Khartoum government's military tactics and obstruction of aid."

"Janjawid, they're called," editorialized *The Baltimore Sun* (May

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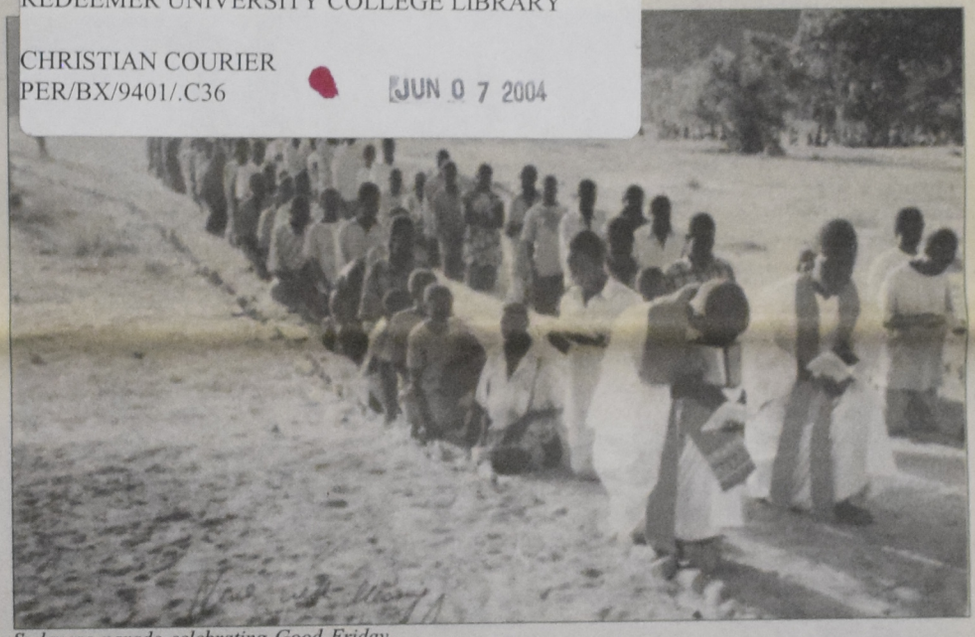
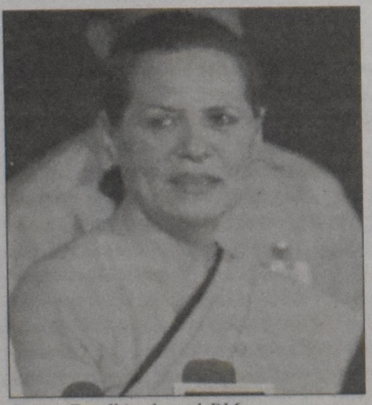


Sudanese parade celebrating Good Friday

India's elections, a victory for religious freedom

Abhijeet Prabhu

BANGALORE, India (Compass) Christians in India hailed the victory of Sonia Gandhi's Congress Party in this month's elections as a triumph for religious freedom.



Sonia Gandhi, elected PM

Most people were stunned by the election results announced on May 13. One national newspaper used the words "shock and awesome" to describe the outcome.

However, some Christian leaders said they feared possible "revenge attacks" against Christians and other religious minorities to punish them for supporting the Congress Party. Congress is known for its more moderate, secular attitude to politics, in contrast to the deposed Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), known for its support of Hindu extremists.

"One would not be surprised if such attacks took place, for example in Gujarat where the state government is still a BJP government," said Paul Joshua, director-designate of the Mylapore Institute for Indigenous Christian Studies.

Hindu leaders had earlier predicted that Christians, particularly in the Dangs belt of Gujarat where Christians are a majority, would vote for the Congress Party. Their predictions were accurate; the vote in Gujarat state went to the Congress Party.

On May 18, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, a Hindu organization) and Mr. Govindacharya, former general secretary of the BJP, launched a *Rashtriya Swabhiman Andolan* (National Self-Respect Agitation) against Sonia Gandhi. They planned to recruit Mahatma Gandhi look-alikes in Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh and use them as mouthpieces against the new prime minister designate.

Christians disappointed by Gandhi's resignation

In a surprise move on the same day, Gandhi announced her withdrawal from party leadership, nominating former finance minister Manmohan Singh as her replacement. Reuters news agency reported that Gandhi had stepped down to protect the new government from the propaganda campaign launched by the VHP. Hundreds of Congress supporters around the country held street protests when party leaders failed

See **India** *page 3...*

Sudan ...continued from page 1

20), "the Arab horsemen who sweep into the impoverished tribal villages of western Sudan, shooting men, raping women, kidnapping children, stealing livestock, setting anything left ablaze. Over the past year, more than one million black Muslims have been driven from their homes, starving and destitute, by these marauding thugs doing the dirty work of the Arab Islamist regime in Khartoum that wants to eliminate support for Darfur rebels seeking to share national riches and power.

"Some of the refugees have fled to neighboring Chad, but most are trapped in a hellish limbo: lacking the basic necessities of life, still threatened by the janjawid and government forces, but unreachable by international relief agencies."

Vast swathes of fertile farmland have been burned and depopulated of their non-Arab inhabitants, accused of harboring rebels, by the Janjawid, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW). "With rare exceptions, the countryside is now emptied of its original Masalit and Fur inhabitants.

"Anything that could sustain life – food, livestock, wells, blankets and clothing – has been looted or destroyed. Villages have been torched, not randomly, but systematically – often not once, but twice."

The consequences of no harvest next November, plus the limited capacity of aid agencies to operate in Darfur, could be catastrophic, say humanitarian workers. Roger Winter, the USAID assistant director, predicted in May that once the rainy season begins, 30 percent of the affected population could die over the next nine months.

The UN increased its estimate of those impacted by the conflict in Darfur from 1.1 million to 2 million in late May.

Terror moving south

The General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches, Rev. Dr. Mvume Dandala, who returned from a visit to the area May 20, warned that the raids are now extending further south, into the area now supposedly under a truce while peacetalks are conducted in Kenya.

"While the graphic media reports have caused all of us, the world over to focus attention primarily on the Darfur," said Dandala, "government backed militias are raiding villages in the Upper Nile around Malakal with equal zeal as that of Darfur.

"... within the last four days, homes of an estimated 23,000 villagers have been razed in the Upper Nile. We further learned that the militias were moving towards the northern part of Upper Nile causing thousands of helpless villagers to flee their homes.

"So far 150,000 people have been displaced and the humanitarian agencies have left the area.

"What is even sadder is that blacks are conscripted into the militia gangs to raid and kill their own innocent people, mostly the Shilluk and Nuer tribes, who for time immemorial have lived in the Upper Nile region as their home."

Dandala concluded: "The AACC believes there are strong grounds for investigating and monitoring reports of crime against humanity in Sudan."

Refugee camps "hell on earth"

Negotiators are making slow progress in Kenya-hosted talks to end the war that pits the Islamic Arabic-speaking government against rebels in the south, who are mainly animist and Christian. Besides religion; oil, ethnicity and ideology also play a role.

Aid agency Medecins Sans Frontieres warned May 20 of a high risk of famine in Darfur. There are "dangerously high" levels of malnutrition and mortality coupled with a rapidly deteriorating food security situation.

Dandala described conditions in three refugee camps he visited close to the capital Khartoum as "hell on earth."

"Here, children, women, the old and young languish in the hot sand with temperatures ranging between 42 degrees centigrade, up to 47 degrees," he said.

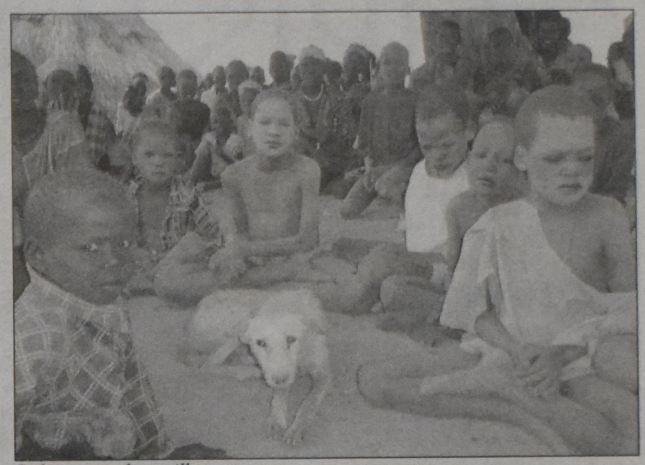
Islamist regime imposing terror

Commenting on the situation in the *National Review*, Paul Marshal, of Freedom House, said, "Over the last 15 years, the Sudanese government has brought together extremist Sunnis and Shiites; turned itself into international-terrorism central; harbored bin Laden; promoted slavery (bin Laden has probably owned African slaves); imposed a reactionary version of Islamic law that includes crucifixion, stoning to death of mothers who are out of wedlock, and 'cross amputation' (removing the hand and foot from opposite sides of the body); waged what the US House of Representatives has called a 'genocidal' war on its southern, largely Christian and animist population; promoted forced conversion to its brand of Islam; strafed refugees with helicopter gunships; and manipulated food relief as a weapon, resulting in the death of over two million people – more than in Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, Cote D'Ivoire, and Liberia combined. It has also produced four million displaced people, the largest such population on the face of the earth."

He goes on to lament the fact that the US State Department is pressuring the southern Sudanese to accept a peace accord that would see strict Islamic law imposed on them by a regime associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, a group outlawed in Egypt.

"The US government," says Marshal, "should not be in the business of forcing non-Muslims – or Muslims for that matter – to submit to the very type of regime that al Qaeda advocates....

"It is now crystal clear," he warns "that states and regions that implement reactionary, Wahabi-like versions of Islamic law view the West as infidels and enemies; are undemocratic and brutal; produce domestic terrorists; and nearly always produce international terrorists. While we try to prevent failed states elsewhere, we may be about to create the conditions for one in Sudan."



Sudanese southern village

Human Rights groups and think-tanks are urging decisive action from both the UN and the US to halt the deaths, that may include force. "Whatever you want to call what's going on in Darfur, the time for forceful outside intervention is unmistakably approaching," said the International Crisis Group (ICG) think-tank in its appeal.

"As a first step, the Security Council must urgently pass a resolution that includes five points," said the ICG: "first, it must condemn what has been happening and demand that it stop; second it must impose an arms embargo, insist that Khartoum disarm the Janjawid and demand respect for the humanitarian ceasefire; third the resolution must call for the safe return of the IDPs; fourth it should authorise a high-level team to investigate the war crimes and crimes against humanity; fifth it should warn Khartoum unambiguously that force may be used."

Sudanese refugees strain resources in neighboring Chad

The influx of refugees into neighboring Chad, where they have been fed by local people out of their meagre food supplies, will create a crisis there as well. The people there needed those supplies to tide over their own families till the next harvest.

"It is war which brought the Sudanese here, and it is our duty to help them," said Isaac Suliman, a 40-year-old farmer from Amadina, a village near the Konoungo refugee camp. "They often stop by and ask for food. We give them what we have," he told IRIN on his way back from the local market.

"But grain prices have rocketed," reports IRIN "and the trees that dot the flat semi-desert of eastern Chad have had their branches lopped off for firewood and poles to make crude shelters. In many places, the carcasses of cattle and donkeys show that overgrazing has stripped the land of its meagre pasture, and that uncontrolled disease is taking its toll on livestock.

A representative of the Chad government asked that the relief agencies flooding into eastern Chad to help the refugees devote some of their time and money to helping the local Chadian population, which did so much to help the refugees before assistance began arriving from abroad.

Many of the refugees are old men and women with children. The younger men have often stayed behind to look after whatever possessions the family might have left, or to fight the Sudanese armed forces and their Janjawid militia allies. Many of them have also been killed by the Janjawid, who make a special point of hunting down and killing young men of fighting age.

Chadian officials also accuse them of frequently raiding across the border into Chad. "The Janjawid are violating the Chadian territory, taking refugees and Chadian cattle, killing the herdsmen. Sometimes, they burn villages. They come in groups of 200 to 300," said a Chadian military commander.

In Tine, a town near the border which has become a home for thousands of refugees, three people died and 15 were injured when a Sudanese air force plane attacking rebel positions in the Sudanese side of the town dropped stray bombs on the Chadian side of the border.

The conflict has apparently precipitated infighting in the government of Chad. A brief and abortive mutiny in mid-May in the Chadian military was brought on because some want to back the rebels in Darfur. Many Chadians are from the same Zagawa tribe. In fact, many are the descendants of Chadians who fled into Sudan several decades ago during Chad's civil war.

[With stories from the AACC, BBC, ENI, IRIN, National Review Online, New York Times, Baltimore Sun.]

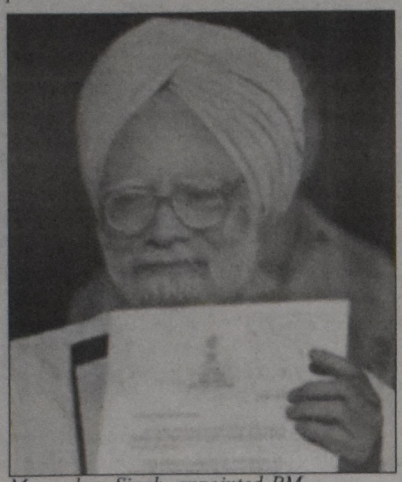
Politics

India ...continued from p. 1

to persuade Gandhi to change her mind.

Christian leaders generally were happy with the prospect of Gandhi as the new prime minister. However, Hindu militant groups complained that Gandhi, born in Italy and a Roman Catholic, would support the conversion of Hindus in India and as such was a threat to the nation.

While disappointed over Gandhi's resignation, Christians continued to celebrate the outcome of the elections. Bishop Bosco D'Penha, auxiliary bishop of Bombay and coordinator of lay associations in the archdiocese, welcomed the verdict given by the people of India and called it "a miracle wrought by prayer." He hoped the results would herald a new era of social harmony and peace, economic justice and the strengthening of relations with neighboring countries.



Manmohan Singh, appointed PM

Anti-conversion law is now out of the question

Dr. Joseph D'Souza, president of the All India Christian Council (AICC), recalled a statement made at the bi-annual AICC conference in Hyderabad in March 2004.

"We declared before more than 1,000 Christian leaders gathered from different parts of the country that the elections were going to be a make or break option for the nation," D'Souza said. "We urged Christian leaders to pray and act. Around India fervent prayers went up for the nation. Incidentally, I was at a recent meeting in Chennai where 2,000 Christian leaders gathered for a day of prayer and fasting.

"Further, the BJP election manifesto of 2004 blatantly declared that they would bring a national anti-conversion law," he continued. "Civil society is now looking forward to the rejection of the *Hindutva* (Hindu nation) agenda that has affected many areas of Indian life. A national anti-conversion law is now out of the question."

The Congress Party won 217 seats in the Lok Sabha (House of Commons), a considerable majority over the BJP's 185 seats. Four Communist parties, which together had won a considerable proportion of the vote, said they would back Congress, without necessarily joining the coalition. This gave the Congress Party the support it needed to form a majority government.

Paul Joshua, commenting on the possible effects of the Congress victory, told Compass that there was "spectacular growth of the church under persecution and a tremendous interest in mission and prayer, paradoxically at a time when mission was discouraged in the church by fundamentalist forces.

Hope for a reversal of Hindu militancy

"It's hard to say how this will affect hard-line groups and their morale," he added. "The political and public conscience of the Indian church was greatly heightened at a time when the church was under threat.... I hope we can continue to do that and continue our engagement and spiritual devotion even when the pressure is not as great as it used to be."

Meanwhile, Bishop Percival Fernandez, general secretary of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India, said in a press statement issued on May 15 that he was very pleased with the victory of secular parties and looked forward to the restoration of a secular, democratic India.

He believed Hindu extremists had created an atmosphere of fear and suspicion in Christian and Muslim communities, sparking acts of violence while the BJP government seemingly turned a blind eye.

See related story on page 7.

(Compass Flash) – On May 18, barely a week after India's Congress party defeated the previous pro-Hindu government in national elections, Chief Minister Selvi J. Jayalalithaa of Tamil Nadu, in southern India, announced the repeal of the state's anti-conversion law. "I have ordered that the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Act 2002 be repealed at once," she said. Observers say criticism from her political opponents and a steep drop in votes for her party were factors in the decision. Hindu nationalists have condemned her actions, but Christian leaders were unanimous in their support. Jayalalithaa's move has also raised hopes that similar legislation may be dropped in four other Indian states.

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

The end of the line for Cyprus?

Cyprus is now a member of the European Union, as of the beginning of last month. Unfortunately it is still very much a divided island, with Turkish Cypriots concentrated in the north and Greek Cypriots in the south. When it was declared late last year that 10 new members would be admitted to the EU, officials made clear their preference to admit a united Cyprus. Early in 2003 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan had launched an effort to reunite the island. Unfortunately this came to naught, as the Turkish-Cypriot President Rauf Denktash would not budge from his support for the status quo.

However, with the EU announcement last December efforts were redoubled to negotiate reunion. The Annan Plan was revived, and a new pro-unification government was given a slender majority in north Cyprus, seemingly paving the way for renewed negotiations. However, once repre-sentatives of the two ethnic communities were brought together, they proved unable to agree on much beyond the date of the popular referendums on a plan that looked unlikely to come about. After representatives of Athens and Ankara entered the picture, it was hoped that some progress could be made, given that the Turkish prime minister was known to favor a resolution of the issue. Once again, however, there was no real breakthrough.

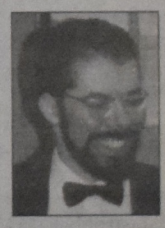
Thus, by the time of the referendums on April 24, the largely unaltered Annan Plan was all the two sides had to vote on. This plan called for a loose Swiss-style federal union of the two sides, with a presidential council, a bicameral parliament and a supreme court, all of which were to contain fixed numbers of Greek and Turkish Cypriots. However, just prior to the vote, Greek Cypriot President Tassos Papadopoulos unexpectedly repudiated the plan. Greek Cypriots thus voted against it by a wide margin, while Turkish Cypriots voted in its favor.

Greek Cypriots objected that the plan would allow Ankara a continued military presence on the island while imposing restrictions on Greek Cypriots wishing to return to their properties in the north. Many objected that, if the plan had been approved, they would be able to move to and buy property anywhere in the EU – but not in north Cyprus.

As I followed the news reports surrounding the Annan Plan and its rejection, I couldn't help thinking back to Canada's own failed Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords more than a decade ago. Wholesale constitutional reform is difficult to sell to voters in the best of circumstances, at least partly because they believe they are being asked to render a verdict on the merits and flaws of a document. In fact, they are usually being asked simply to ratify the fact that their leaders have reached agreement, period.

In the case of Cyprus, it might have been better if Greek Cypriots had voted to remove the barbed wire and adopt a not altogether equitable political arrangement, while working for intercommunal reconciliation and an eventual softening of its harsh edges. Too often in the past Greek Cypriots have made nonnegotiable demands and have wound up with worse. Their leaders have been less than adept at understanding politics as the art of compromise.

An agreement to end the island's division could still come about. But both UN and EU officials are disinclined to put further effort into something with so little payoff. In the meantime, Cypriots themselves must seize every opportunity to cultivate better relations between the two communities on the ground, while hoping for a better day.



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Editorial

Using the name of the Lord in the political arena

Harry der Nederlanden

Reformed folk have long been urging fellow Christians to make their faith felt in the public square. At the time of the Reformation, politics was discussed in the language of religion, we point out. It was the Enlightenment with its overvaluation of reason and science that gradually caused Christians to privatize their religion. More and more we compartmentalized our lives, confining the language of faith to inner, devotional life and the church.

In the West this compartmentalization was accompanied by a decrease in church membership and a loss of influence by the church. Sociologists spoke of a process of secularization that would lead eventually to the disappearance of religion.

But we've seen a powerful resurgence of religion as a force in politics all around the world. People have begun to see that secularism was itself a religion and have become bolder in speaking out of their own basic beliefs. In the US Christians have rudely elbowed their way into the political arena like a bunch of hicks into a high-class tea party. Bush's use of faith language instead of the language of American civil religion makes many people distinctly uneasy. In the context of a long enforced political ethos, it sounds hokey and transgressive. It violates certain codes of civility and makes the speaker sound like a boob who is unaware of the proper decorum.

Dangerous evangelicals

At the beginning of the election campaign in Canada, the Liberals exploited this general discomfort at the emergence of an evangelical voice. They used pollsters to ask Ontarians, 'Are you more or less likely to vote for the Conservatives if you knew the party had been taken over by evangelical Christians?' It wasn't a genuine poll. It was a campaign trick to plant false perceptions without actually lying. The question not only plants suspicions about the Conservative party, it also sows suspicions regarding evangelicals, as if they are a threat to democracy. It exploits certain negative stereotypes about evangelicals already widely held by Canadians largely because of events in the US.

Martin was – quite properly – rapped on the knuckles for this dirty and divisive campaign trick. He is a devout Catholic himself, critics point out, and he would protest if the Conservatives attempted to plant suspicions that he was going to be directed by the Vatican. (It's not entirely unthinkable. Some bishops in the US want to withhold the Eucharist from Catholic politicians that are pro-choice.) And think of the scandal that would have resulted if one of the parties had asked, 'How would you feel if party X was being taken over by the Jews?' Why is it permissible to do to evangelicals what is outrageous to do to Jews?

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada asked for a public apology, but I haven't heard that they ever got it. Martin may well have been unaware of the sleazy tactic, but it fits in with his strategy of associating Harper with Republican politics in the US.

Uneasy on the left and the right

Having said all this, I must admit a certain unease myself with the use of religious language in the political arena, and not because I want to see religion privatized. A PBS program on Bush's faith quotes him as saying, "I believe that God wants me to be President of the US." I'm not comfortable with that. Nevertheless, a person may feel called to political office just as one may feel called to the pastoral ministry. But in the politics of many evangelicals specific policies become too closely associated with the Christian faith, and as a result (in the US) the Democrats begin to be painted as the forces of unbelief. The battle between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of darkness is transplanted wholesale to the political arena. I'm not saying that Bush is guilty of doing this, but it is implicit in a surprising percentage of the rhetoric that I get from the American right.

It is, therefore, no wonder that the Catholic bishops as well as the clergy from the mainline denominations in the US object strenuously to Bush's use of the language of the Christian faith. It becomes associated with policies that they regard as the very antithesis of a Christian approach to public policy. They are mortified to have the name of Christ associated with what they see as US imperialism, militarism, global capitalism, neglect of the poor and spoliation of the environment. (Their charges, not mine; though they can make a credible case.)

From the other side, we have pro-Bush, free enterprise Christians who rail at the pronouncements of the World Council of Churches, of the Catholic bishops and of the mainline churches. All too often, the complaint is, the latter draw on a left-wing model of the global economy to depict the US and Western corporations as exploiters of the poor and as built upon the exploitation of the Southern hemisphere. Anything that counteracts the forces of capitalism and globalization is seen as a blow for biblical justice and shalom.

As regular as clockwork, world leaders receive letters and pronouncements from the mainline churches telling them that violence is bad, that globalization is destructive, that there are great inequalities in the world, and that they'd better stop the genocide in Sudan, AIDS in Africa, Israeli aggression in Palestine, starvation in Ethiopia, pollution in the North, child labor in the South, unemployment in the East and consumerism in the West.

Principles and politics

Too much of it is obvious, simplistic and moralistic. It's not just that often (not always) church leaders are pronouncing on complex political issues in which they have no special competence. Often they also analyze political and economic problems from a framework that is not obviously Christian. When the church speaks, the word it proclaims must have pretty direct ties to Scripture. Critics on the right complain that often the political theology behind these proclamations suggest that the coming of the Kingdom of heaven depends on the transformation that our political action achieves in the social and economic structures of this world.

But isn't often the same thing true of the right?

The fact that Christians come to quite different ideas about what is the best policy to pursue on specific political issues shouldn't bother us. Political issues can be very complex and the needs of our society change under our very noses. Principles and integrity are important, but so are compromise and adaptation in the political arena. What gets hammered out is always a mix, a thing of gold, iron and clay that soon needs fixing.

Even in a solidly Christian country with all Christian parties, there would be politicians blasting one another for being blind, misguided servants of darkness. Our vision is not just limited and partial, it is also distorted in numerous ways – by sins of pride, ambition and greed, but also by ideologies from the right and the left. Even by our own theologies and philosophies.

All this is part of the human condition. To expect unanimity from Christians on political issues when they cannot even agree on the interpretation of Scripture is unrealistic. It is even harmful.

By the time we have hashed out what Scripture and faith mean for health care programs, for poverty, for military expenditures, subsidized housing, etc., we are several steps removed from Scripture. So we must be very reticent about drawing glibly on religious language to support our political programs. Such language implies that all those who are faithful to God will support this or that policy, and conversely all those who oppose it are opposing the will of God.

Nevertheless, in the political arena and everywhere else in life we are engaged with principalities and powers as well as with flesh and blood, and the battle is not just against what is outside and over against us but with what is with us and within us. We do, therefore, need to draw on the work that Christ has begun in us and among us by his Spirit.

But we need to remind ourselves that by the time we have translated the language of faith into the language of politics, it is already several removes from Scripture. It has been translated into principles. It has become adulterated with traditions and ideologies. And it has been applied to one specialized area of life in which the law of love works differently than it does in the family or in the church. On top of it all, the biblical principles are applied artfully by creative individuals in a democratic, ever-changing society.

So we must call upon the name of the Lord, but we must not presume to commandeer the army of the Lord. He's quite capable of doing that himself.

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Letters

Arafat not the only villain

I read with interest Mr. Harry Antonides' recent review of Arafat's War, by Efraim Karsh. While Mr. Antonides is more or less correct in his assessment that Arafat is not a peacemaker, his review appears to be little more than a thinly veiled criticism of the Palestinian cause. Yes, the chances for peace in Palestine would likely be higher if someone other than Arafat were running the Palestinian side of things, both politically and socially; however, recent Israeli leaders, Ariel Sharon in particular, have done little, if anything, to work toward a real peace, a lasting peace, a peace with a measure of justice.

While Antonides uses his review to highlight Arafat's thuggery and violent ways, we should not forget that Ariel Sharon, the current Israeli prime minister, also has a lot of blood on his hands. Sharon played an important role in the 1967 war, during which many Palestinian civilians were killed. He was also heavily involved in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, as well as the subsequent bombing of Beirut, both of which resulted in the killing of many Lebanese civilians. Currently, Mr. Sharon is responsible for the ongoing killing of hundreds of innocent Palestinian men, women and children, as well as the illegal demolitions of Palestinian homes. Suffice it to say that, along with Arafat, Ariel Sharon has been anything but a peacemaker.

Stereotypes and black-and-white thinking

Mr. Antonides' review, while well-written, is flawed in several ways. First, the use of the Eric Hoffer's quote is, at best, misleading. Israel's survival is not solely dependent upon "Jewish efforts and Jewish resources." In fact, Israel receives fifty percent of the United States' foreign aid annually, which amounts to billions of dollars in financial and military aid. Without the aid of the United States, Israel would not be the country it is today, nor would it be able to suppress the rights of Palestinian people in the manner it currently does.

Secondly, Antonides' reiteration that "the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is … a microcosm of the larger conflict between the Osama bin Laden kind of Islamism and the rest of the world" is absurd, both in its simplicity and its intrinsic racist and colonialist tones. Antonides creates a simplistic dichotomy by lumping all Israelis in with the civilized world, while relegating all Palestinians to nothing more than blood-thirsty radical Muslims. This kind of ridiculous thinking is neither a true nor fair analysis of a complicated and intricate political conflict; rather, it is analysis based solely on stereotypes and caricatures. There are many Israelis, especially the radical settlers who break international law by occupying Palestinian land, who commit acts of violence against Palestinians. At the same time, there are many Palestinians, such as Hanan Ashrawi and Edward Said, who have articulated the Palestinian cause and worked for peace in a peaceful manner, without resorting to the usual stereotypes and simplistic, black-and-white thinking, which so often cloud the issue. Perhaps if leaders on both sides of the conflict were more like Ashrawi and Said, and used less of the kind of rhetoric found in Antonides' writing, there would be a chance for peace in Palestine.

Finally, Mr. Antonides claims that "Arafat walked away from an American-brokered peace plan in 2000 that conceded almost all of the Palestinian demands, to re-start yet another campaign of suicide bombings in Israel." This is not entirely true. Yes, Arafat walked away from the peace plan; however, that plan would have allowed the settlements in the West Bank to remain, thus carving up Palestinian land into so many islands, separated by Israeli roads, which Palestinians are not allowed to use. Also, Antonides is wrong to blame only Arafat and the Palestinian people for the current intifada, since the cause of it is obviously debatable, depending who you listen to. What is not debatable, or mentioned by Antonides, is the fact that Israel remains in violation of more than thirty United Nations' resolutions. By refusing Palestinians the right to travel within their own country, demolishing the homes of Palestinians, allowing Jewish settlers to build homes and communities on Palestinian land, and erecting a wall that cuts off Palestinians from their families, homes and farms, Israel is in violation of international law.

Mr. Antonides is a gifted writer and thinker. Unfortunately, there seems to be a lack of guiding principles, such as tolerance, respect for human rights, or objectivity, in his analysis. While he decries the actions of men like Arafat, Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, he praises and defends George W. Bush and the current US administration. If Antonides is really concerned about violence, deceit, terrorism, and defiant attitudes towards peace and the international community, perhaps he might write an article criticizing the US president. After all, thousands of people have been killed in Iraq, the administration lied about the reasons for going to war, the war has created more terrorism in the Middle East, and the US has defied both the international community and international law. With the current prisoner abuse scandal blowing open, the Bush administration is in danger of losing all credibility. And so is Antonides. His pro-America, pro-Bush, pro-war, pro-Zionist, anti-UN, anti-Arab, anti-peace, and anti-Palestinian rhetoric lead this reader to the conclusion that the *Christian Courier* has become a soapbox from which Mr. Antonides sounds off about his personal partisan biases and simplistic, one-sided views, while the red lights of double standards and false dichotomies flash on and off and on again.

Sincerely,
Johan de Zoete,
Hamilton, Ontario

Yes, in some sense CC *is also a soapbox in which people air their viewpoints and opinions. They are not always dispassionate and even-handed. And there is certainly a great deal to be said on the Palestinian side of the question. But CC has in the past given space to other views and invites anyone to do so again. It is, incidentally, an issue that seems to provoke rhetoric from both sides.*

The editor

CCC letter not support for Democratic nominee

I read with interest the recent article by John Bolt of Calvin Seminary regarding the letter sent, by the Canadian Council of Churches, to the Prime Minister about the Ballistic Missile Defense System.

One of the reasons why materials should be publicized is to promote public discussion and debate. I am always gratified when that debate is wholesome, thorough and characterized by restraint.

From time to time I am puzzled by what gets written or said. By means of this note I just want to be very clear that nowhere in the letter to the Prime Minister was there any implication that I, or others, were urging our American CRC members to vote for John F. Kerry, the presumed Democratic nominee for the American presidency.

Frankly I am mystified by that extrapolation and disappointed that a significant collective witness such as this has been written off as mere partisan politics. All of us are residents of this planet and all of us need to be concerned about the reduction of nuclear weapons. To that end the CRC in Canada has the privilege of cooperating with ecumenical partners on a range of issues. In this particular case, an unprecedented 20 church leaders endorsed the letter after a rigorous process of drafting and approval. Similar CCC efforts in the past have had significant impact on political decisions.

Whenever we do things together with others there may be some phrases and sentences that we would choose to revise or say differently. But the overall message is consistent with the decisions and thoughts expressed by the CRC synods in 1977 and 1982 regarding nuclear weapons and the need for members and churches to address our governments on this issue. Everyone is invited to read the Synodical statements for themselves. You may go to the CRCNA web site and under the Social Justice section you will find the Synodical Statements re: War. Take a look at the 1982 statement and see especially statements 9,10, and 11.

Sincerely yours,
Bill Veenstra
Canadian Ministries Director

Re: A Letter to the PM and a Challenge, April 26, 2004

John Bolt says the stakes are high for Canada, for freedom, for the church, and for the gospel. For those very reasons I would respond to his challenge by making my selection in favor of the Canadian Council of Churches letter, and am thankful for Bill Veenstra's signature on that letter.

Cindy Bruin
Surrey, B.C.

Christian Courier

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Politics

Elections 2004 - the fun stuff

Harry der Nederlanden

By the time readers of *CC* get this issue, almost half the time between Paul Martin's announcement and the date of the federal election will already have passed. That's in contrast to the electioneering in the US, which seems to begin about halfway through a president's term and continue several weeks after (some Democrats are still recounting the Florida ballots). Since elections do not seem to bring out the best in candidates or in parties, Canadians can once again indulge their sense of superiority to the US.

The tone of the campaign was set almost immediately by Martin. Drawing on the central feature of the Canadian identity – our happiness at not quite being Americans – he tried to scare voters into believing that it is Stephen Harper's intention to reshape us in the image of George Bush. Harper, of course, tried to scare us by suggesting that Martin is nothing more than another one of those sleazy Liberals who have been dipping deeply into our pockets to do little more than make commercials for the Liberal party.

Aversion therapy

Both the major parties claim that they are conducting a campaign of ideas. The idea, of course, is not to stimulate the electorate to reflect on issues but to instill in them a visceral revulsion for the other's image. If American policy turns your stomach, you should gag when you think of Harper. If corruption, arrogance and waste turn your stomach, Martin should make you sick. Is it any wonder that Canadians get indigestion during election season? Both sides are out to make you sick at the very sight and sound of the other.

This resort to "aversion therapy" becomes important in a campaign where both candidates and both parties are trying to occupy as large a segment of the middle as possible. Both are small 'l' liberal parties with a strong tendency toward small 'c' conservatism. Both are afraid of any great amount of change, for that will mean slipping out of the magnanimous center. And both are afraid of cutting services too much for that would raise the ire of the pampered electorate, while funding them more adequately would make them look like tax-vampires.

Well, maybe not. One week into the campaign Martin suddenly fastened on health care as the number one issue and promised to pump a whopping $9 billion (that's almost ten zeros) into the system. Without raising taxes.

Stephen Harper and Jack Layton were, of course, quick to point out that it was Martin as finance minister who mutilated the system in the first place. To cut the deficit. And only a few weeks ago the present Liberal finance minister stated very emphatically that the money wasn't there. Where's the 9 billion coming from? Not from taxes, not from fees, says Martin.

So, are we looking at Liberal deficits in the future? No, says Martin, it's all coming out of projected surpluses, surpluses, surpluses. No mention, either, of plans to make the health care system – the costliest in the world – more efficient.

The opposition responded by singing, Promises, promises. It's a promise the Liberals won't be able to carry out, they warn. So, does that mean they think the program isn't a bad idea?

The Conservatives actually came out with a strong program for health care funding in their platform, including a national drug plan, home care and catastrophic drug coverage. The Liberals really did need to pull a giant health-care rabbit out of the hat to steal the limelight from the Conservatives. The NDP will shoot anyone who tries to create private hospitals, and the Bloc warns the feds to keep their hands off – just hand over the money.

Appeals to generosity

The NDP promises once again to do the Robin Hood thing – rob everybody to buy favor with everybody. This time they propose an inheritance tax. All the retiring baby boomers in Toronto and Vancouver who sell their houses and get a windfall will have to ante up. The Liberals and the NDP have a high view of Canadians: they keep stressing their generosity. Canadians are eager to pay more taxes because they know it will be well-spent – for health care, for senior care, for child care, for corporate care, for bureaucrat care, for senate care. Little mention is being made in the campaign, though, of more aid for hurting countries in the southern hemisphere. Not a whole lot of enthusiastic rhetoric about saving the environment either, except by the NDP, which is courting the disaffected.

Let's tick off some more of the issues. In terms of child care, the Conservative plan is negligible. The Liberals will double the tax credits for caregivers who stay at home. The NDP promises the moon and sixpence in this area: a national child care and education plan. (Come on, Harper, you could have at least matched the Liberals here.)

For the cities, the Conservatives promise a share of the gas tax (to fight crime) and the Liberals point to their GST relief and also promise to "look at" sharing some of the gas tax. Only the NDP talks about more non-profit housing and public transportation. But maybe the others are just leaving it up to the cities to decide where the money is to go.

Both the Conservatives and the Liberals will increase funding for the military, finally putting out some bucks for new equipment so our soldiers won't fall out of the sky upon the innocents below. The Conservatives will probably follow through more faithfully here. The NDP promises our soldiers better pay and better benefits in case they get hurt.

Party dreams

On the economy, all three major parties have big dreams. Yes, they are all dreaming. The Conservatives plan to keep reducing the national debt – while cutting taxes without cutting anything else that will make us cry out. The Liberals promise balanced budgets while providing all Canadians all the benefits and services all generous Canadians deserve (unlike those poor Americans). And the NDP says, Blow the budget! What's a little deficit?

Only the Conservatives promise tax relief, an un-Canadian thing to do, says Martin. They'll also increase the per-child tax deduction by 2,000 (maybe that's their child care program). The others figure Canadians are more eager to get more and better services from their caregiver government.

Talk about education hasn't figured very prominently in the election campaign yet, but both major parties pledge more in the way of student loans. So in contrast to health care, the emphasis here seems to be on pay-as-you-go. The NDP wants to ban private, for-profit universities in Canada. Where do you think the rich will go then, Jack?

All the parties promise to do the usual things against air and water pollution, but none really envision putting a lot more oomph into government efforts here. The NDP wants to divert more money to sun, wind and wave sources of energy. (Sounds like a beach to me.) Despite all the coverage on climate change, the voters right now don't seem hugely interested, and the politicians seem content to leave it that way. Let's not look to far into the future....

All the parties promise better relations between the federal government and the provinces, especially the Bloc Quebecois, with one province in particular. That's nice!

Foreign affairs and Calgary Flames

The subject of foreign affairs for Canadians for the most part means relations with its rich neighbor to the south. It features prominently in the Liberal campaign. Martin keeps saying that Harper wants to turn us into Americans – a fate worse than death. But a little anti-Americanism in a Canadian election campaign is as Canadian as hockey in June. In June!!

Stephen Harper was photographed wearing a Calgary Flames sweater in Ottawa. Before venturing out so boldly, however, he had a long meeting with party leaders and strategists. Might it identify him too closely – gasp! – with the West?

Both parties want to look for ways to provide generic drugs to fight AIDS in the developing world. Let's hold them to it. And everyone loves the UN. How UN-American.

The gun registry. Only the comedians love the gun registry. The Conservatives will replace it with a ship registry (fork over Martin), and the Liberals will keep it but, from the looks of it, make it virtually voluntary. Maybe it should be part of health care.

Gay marriage. What the candidates of the two major parties are saying is all window dressing, folks. Nobody except the NDP wants to touch it, so it will likely be left to the courts no matter who wins.

Democratic reform. Remember that? Martin once promised greater openness, transparency and power to the people. And senate reform. Sound familiar? We debated them hotly – in high school, over 40 years ago. Yes, they are fun to talk about. And talk about and talk about.

For a much more responsible overview of election issues, Citizens for Public Justice has put together an eight page bulletin available on the internet at www.cpj.ca It has two pages of questions to ask the candidates and raises issues that are hardly even mentioned in the party platforms and the campaign speeches. The website of Campaign 2000, a coalition to end child and family poverty in Canada is www.campaign2000.ca

Environment

Grassroots politics and keeping the grubs out of your lawn

Harry DerNederlanden

I must begin by apologizing for this column right away. If you have a lick of sense, you will simply skip over it, for it won't add a cubit to your stature.

Most Canadians, of course, including those of Dutch stock, aren't really interested in adding cubits to their stature or anywhere else, so they won't be put off by my warning. The reason I begin with a warning is not because the Minister of Health has ruled my writing dangerous to public health and not because what I'm about to say subverts creation order, but because I'm writing on a topic I know absolutely nothing about.

That has never stopped any writer, of course. Most political commentators start with an empty head. They simply let their fingers start dancing on the keyboard, and, presto! Before you can say 'numbskull' they've traced the latest scandal to the highest level. That's the ultimate goal of every journalist: to begin in the sewer and follow the trail up to Ottawa, the White House, the Pentagon, CSIS, Rome, Pat Robertson or the Celestial Department for Global Climate Control.

My aims are much humbler. I have foresworn both Kuyperian triumphalism and the Calvinist work ethic, and I no longer cast a jealous eye on the capitals of this world. Although, if the Liberals had passed a little sponsorship cash to *CC* to promote Canadian unity among the schismatics of the Great Dutch Migration, I would have looked much more kindly upon the efforts of our former P.M. Humble people aren't too proud to take a handout.

The government has a way of making us all humble. You receive this paper so inexpensively, for example, in part because of the largesse of the Canadian government. Under the PAP agreement, the government subsidizes every mailing to the tune of hundreds of dollars. Long ago, in the misty past, the post office just had different rates for magazines and books. If a 10 gram letter costs 49 cents to mail, then a paper that weighs almost 10 times as much should cost about 5 bucks to mail, more than the cost of the paper. In the old days the post office kept the papers and magazines flowing by posting a special rate. Nowadays, the government calls it a subsidy. The subsidy brings our mailing cost down to less than the cost of a letter. That creates an enormous feeling of gratitude toward government in our office. Every mailing day we raise a glass to the government: may it continue to grow in stature, cubit by cubit. And may we share in its bounties.

I know some of you look upon such governmental policy the way Luther looked upon Tetzel's sale of indulgences, but that's old-fashioned thinking. We must learn to look upon the government as the source of good, like an overflowing fountain. In the past our political theology has been biased. Instead of looking upon the government as the sun whose light and warmth sustains us, we've tended to see it as a black hole that sucks up entire planets. Our government needs our appreciation.

Recently a study was conducted out west that claimed a small herd of cattle belching and breaking wind was responsible for as much greenhouse gas as my Dodge Caravan. To live up to the Kyoto accord, farmers will have to teach their cattle better manners. Now a government watchdog wants to do a study of greenhouse gas emissions on the floor of parliament and in the senate. That's not kind. The only way the Canadian government will be able to meet the Kyoto guidelines will be to cut debate in half. Every farmer out west knows that the average politician in Ottawa generates 10 times as much gas as the average cow. And they tend to live much longer, especially in the senate.

This brings us to our topic – killing pests. Politicians are afraid of pest exterminators for a number of reasons. If you have a dark view of government, you may misinterpret this connection between politicians and pests. Put your bias aside. They're intervening for our good and for the good of the environment. Government at all levels is interested in protecting and nurturing grassroots politics.

That's why they're moving to prohibit spraying for grubs. It's not that they're identifying with the grubs or that they're caving in to pressure exerted by the Association for the Prevention of Cruel Treatment of Grubs (POCTOG). The stuff used to spray for grubs is toxic. A recent study funded by the Liberal government and carried out by various departments in select universities across Canada showed that it killed grubs. If you dropped mice into a pailful of the stuff, it killed some of those too. It stands to reason that it, therefore, can't be good for human beings, especially for those with family ties to grubs.

Many municipalities have banned such spraying and now the Quebec government is banning it all across the province. An expert hired by the government is advising people how to deal with grubs without spraying. Although, as I said at the beginning I'm no expert, her advice sounds right to me.

She suggests planting native plants such as dandelions, clover and creeping Charlie to attract other beneficial insects. I discovered this strategy long ago by trial and error. Mostly error. All my neighbors, those on either side and the three across the road, have always sprayed – against grubs, against dandelions, against creeping Charlie, against creeping Jenny (no gender discrimination), against white clover and yellow clover, and against cats and dogs.

Every spring their lawns looked thick, lush, a deep, uniform green without a weed of any kind. But disaster struck each and every one of them. A wail of terror would waken me one lovely summer morning, and when I rushed to look out the window, expecting to see teenage muggers, one of my neighbors would be stretched out on his lawn. In his hands yellow handfuls of sod lifted out like dead scalps from a lawn that only yesterday had been his primary source of pride. The first thing the man used to do every morning was to come out and marvel at its beauty and perfection, and in the evening, as the sun set and dusk descended on the neighborhood, the last thing you'd see across the street is him gazing across his lawn, his smile of contentment catching the sun's last rays.

Every one of my neighbors has had to replace his lawn at least twice during the time that I've lived here. It's a terrible blow to their ego. One has died, two have moved away, and the other two look pretty shaky. For each of them a perfect lawn was a promise of Paradise. It sustained their hope.

My lawn has always been over 50 percent dandelions, clover and creeping Charlie/ Jenny. And it has never had to be replaced. Of course, my neighbors have never accorded it the honorific title of lawn. But I tell myself that without my front yard as a contrast, theirs wouldn't look half as good. Especially in the realm of beauty relativism plays a role. Have you ever noticed how boring those American TV shows become that have nothing but beautiful actresses? They become boring, indistinguishable. I confuse the characters because they all look alike. My lawn has character. And endurance – the Calvinist virtue of perseverance.

If my neighbors heed the wise counsel of their government, soon all the lawns will look like mine. The question arises: where will all those retired men invest their energies and where will they achieve their sense of identity and pride? This isn't just about grubs, folks.

This is about grassroots politics. The Quebec government is subverting an entire culture. There is a direct correlation between voter placidity and perfect lawns. Without the pacifying effect of grass on the average male suburbanite, those energies, the discontent and the volatile quest for identity and pride may well be diverted into the political arena. It will foment great unrest as these men seek an image of perfection elsewhere, perhaps from the government.

Is it an accident that this grassroots politics is happening first in Quebec? I smell conspiracy in high places. I smell a story. I smell a Pulitzer Prize. I smell ... lawn spray? Oh-oh, better close the window.

Indian church leaders laud Sonia Gandhi's 'act of renunciation'

Anto Akkara

New Delhi, India (ENI) Church leaders in India have lauded Sonia Gandhi, president of the Indian National Congress party, for refusing to accept the mantle of prime minister of the world's largest democracy following her party's victory in recent general elections.

In spite of emotional appeals and demonstrations by Congress party leaders and workers across India urging her to reconsider her decision, the Italian-born widow of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi stood her ground.

Reiterating that she was not hungry for power, Gandhi on May 19 made the Congress party endorse Manmohan Singh, a Sikh, who was set to become India's first non-Hindu prime minister.

The federal coalition government under a banner known as the United Progressive Alliance is to be led by the Congress party under the leadership of Singh, the architect of India's economic reforms when he was finance minister 10 years ago.

"This is a wise step. She has to be congratulated for this act of renunciation," said Church of South India's (CSI) Bishop Jeyapaul David, president of the National Council of Churches in India, a grouping of 29 Orthodox and Protestant churches.

Speaking to ENI from his office in southern Tamil Nadu state, David noted that "by declining" the post of prime minister, Gandhi" has taken the wind out of the sails of the defeated (Hindu) fundamentalists."

Gandhi explained that an "inner voice" said she should not run after the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) announced plans for nation-wide protests against a "foreigner" heading the Indian government, saying this would mark "a black day."

"This is a heroic and sacrificial act in the present political scenario," Father Babu Joseph, spokesperson for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India said of Gandhi's decision not to seek government office. "In a masterstroke, she has put an end to the legitimate fears of polarization of the Indian society."

Bishop Z James Terom, moderator of the Church of North India said: "This is a very appropriate and timely decision." He noted, "This will only endear her more to the people and she will be an example to the self-serving politicians hungry for power." Even those who were earlier "apprehensive about her foreign origin will now support the Congress party."

Hundreds of Christians killed in Nigerian violence

Harry der Nederlanden

Although the situation is now under control, after a curfew was put into affect, the rioting and carnage in Kano, Nigeria has taken a heavier toll in lives than reported earlier. The Christian Association of Nigeria in Kano estimates that 1,000 people were killed, but some estimates are much higher.

Reuter reported that hundreds of people, mostly Christians, have been burned and hacked to death by rioting Muslim mobs in reprisal attacks between May 11and 15 for the slaying of hundreds of Muslims in central Nigeria 10 days earlier. Thousands more Christians, by some estimates over 30,000, many hungry and penniless, camped in police barracks across the city to escape rampaging youths armed with knives and gasoline. Many are leaving the city for good.

A week after the Kano violence had stopped, Nigerian newspapers reported that several Christian villages had been attacked in Plateau State, leaving 20 people dead.

Meanwhile, the government of Bauchi state in east central Nigeria said it was dealing with more than 27,000 people who had fled their homes, many of whom had fled there from Plateau state.

"We have more than 27,000 people in 35 camps spread across Bauchi," a state government spokesman told IRIN. Most of them were Muslims who feared reprisals by the predominantly Christian communities in which they lived, he added.

The recurring conflict between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria could worsen and threaten the stability of Africa's most populous nation, said one African who studies conflict and peace issues, according to CNSNews.

But many factors other than religion also are contributing to the tensions, said George Wachira, executive director of Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa organization.

Wachira said the case of Nigeria, a federal state, is made more delicate by the fact that a dozen states are now governed under Islamic (sharia) law, despite the presence of Christians there.

Proscribed penalties under sharia can include the amputation of limbs for stealing, stoning to death for adultery and public flogging for alcohol consumption.

According to successive studies on the Nigerian conflicts, fears by small tribes that they will be politically and economically dominated by bigger tribes fuels resentment, which eventually boils into all-out armed conflict. Nigeria has more than 230 tribes.

In addition, many farming and herding communities in the increasingly arid north have been pressing southwards to escape the steady encroachment of the Sahara Desert. The Associated Press reported that the violence pitted "predominantly Muslim herdsmen and traders against Christian farming groups in 'a competition for scarce resources,' explained Chris Alli, a retired Nigerian army general. 'The problem is not a religious problem. Persistent drought has fueled the battle over land.'"

Radical Islamists, of course, have been eager to exploit the tensions for their own ends, despite the efforts of religious and government leaders to downplay religious animosities.

IRIN, the news agency of the UN, comments: "Ethnic and religious massacres are nothing new in Nigeria. However, the latest outburst of sectarian violence comes against a background of increasing poverty in this country of 126 million people, increasing radicalization in the Islamic north and declining public confidence in its latest six-year-old experiment with multi-party democracy.

"It was triggered by the massacre of Muslims in Yelwa. But this in turn was a reprisal for the killing of dozens of local Christians in February, many of whom were hacked down in a church where they had gone to seek refuge.

Religion is a secondary factor in Nigerian violence

(IRIN) Today's ethnic and religious tensions have their roots in Nigeria's pre-colonial past and often reflect rivalries that were exploited by British colonial rulers to control the vast territory of more than 250 ethnic groups.

The hostility of the minority tribes that occupy much of central Nigeria towards Hausa and Fulani Muslims whose origins lie further north revolve around a fear of domination.

In 1804, Islamic purist, Uthman dan Fodio (a Fulani) launched a holy war or jihad which saw him conquer the ancient Hausa city states of northern Nigeria to create the Sokoto Caliphate, one of the biggest pre-colonial states ever formed in Africa.

The southward advance of the Caliphate appears only to have been halted by the northward expansion of British colonial rule from the Atlantic coast in the late 19th century.

But under British indirect rule system, the Caliphate was allowed to even extend its authority over previously unconquered areas to the south in return for guaranteeing its loyalty to the colonial authorities. This move was resented by most of the tribes in central Nigeria that converted to Christianity.

With independence in 1960, the minority groups of Nigeria's Middle Belt felt freed from immediate Hausa-Fulani influence, and began to assert a concept of their own, exclusive homeland. Their claims were made even more acute by the continued southward migration of the Hausas and Fulanis, who are mainly traders and livestock herders.

Over several decades, the Hausas and Fulanis have formed large communities among the original inhabitants of central Nigeria. Since these Muslim incomers often been richer and wielded greater political influence than the local people, resentment against them only deepened.

This situation has been exacerbated by the introduction of strict Islamic Shari'ah law by 12 states in the predominantly Muslim north since 2000. .

"Shariah served to reinforce fears of Hausa-Fulani domination and religious hegemony among the ethnic groups of central Nigeria," Ike Onyekwere, a prominent political analyst, told IRIN.

Chinese Christians testify of persecution before U.N. Commission

Xu Mei

NANJING, China (Compass) For the first time in history, Chinese Christians gave evidence of persecution in April at a special meeting called by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) in Geneva. Several speakers testified to beatings, imprisonment, torture and damage to church buildings in recent years.

The United States then asked the Commission to consider censuring China for its human rights record. However, 27 of the 53 member-states, including repressive regimes such as Cuba, Eritrea and Saudi Arabia, voted with China to defeat the move.

This is the 11th year in a row that politics within the UNCHR have defeated similar resolutions against China.

Speakers at the special meeting on "Repression of Religious Freedom in China" included Bob Fu, president of the China Aid Association which documents persecution of Chinese Protestants; Xu Yongze of the Born Again house church movement, who was imprisoned five times for his faith; and Brother Yun, hero of the best-selling autobiography *The Heavenly Man.*

The two-hour meeting was chaired by Lord Chan, a committed Christian and one of two ethnic Chinese peers in the British House of Lords.

Joseph Kung, president of the Cardinal Kung Foundation, submitted a written report on the persecution of unregistered Catholic churches in China. Ben Rogers of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) spoke on behalf of Joseph Kung at the meeting. He was further supported by Catholic human rights campaigner Harry Wu, who spent a total of 19 years in Chinese labor camps.

Female members of the South China Church also gave testimony of how they were arrested and pressured through torture and sexual assault to give false evidence against their pastor, Gong Shengliang, in 2001.

One of these women, Cao Hongmei, told the Commission, "They questioned me for about a month. When I didn't answer them, they would use different kinds of ways to torture me.... They also threatened me, saying, 'We can beat you to death, and throw you into the Han river or dig a hole somewhere to bury you. Who will question us about that?'"

Liu Xianzhi added, "I was taken to Zhongxiang Police Training Center. Six or seven male policemen started to question me in their dormitory. One asked me, 'Do you know why we arrest you?' I said, 'Because I believe in Jesus.' He slapped my face when he heard this. He said, 'Do you know what age we are in today? And you still believe in Jesus?' I didn't answer him back."

During the meeting, Bob Fu presented an official document issued in November 2003 by authorities in Qingdao city, Shandong province, as evidence of China's ongoing campaign against unregistered churches.

Commission members also watched video footage of Chinese authorities destroying a church in Zhejiang province.

The U.N. hearing was a significant breakthrough in publicizing the plight of China's unregistered Christians. However, China was able to block any official censure with the support of sympathetic member states.

Chinese house church teacher killed in custody

Stefan J. Bos

BEIJING, China (ANS) — A teacher of an influential Chinese house church with 500,000 members was beaten to death by Chinese security forces and several other believers and leaders were detained, a well informed human rights watchdog said Monday, May 24.

The Voice of the Martyrs (VOM) said it had learned that Gu Xianggao, 28, "was beaten to death on April 27 while in the custody of Chinese Public Security Bureau (PSB) officers." Gu was a teacher of the house church group "Three Grades Servants" in Heilongjiang Province, northeast China.

Group leader Xu Shuangfu, a well-known house church leader since the 1980s, was also among those detained, VOM said. He has been arrested more than 20 times, and spent over 20 years in prison, the organization explained.

It was not immediately clear what his status is.

Parents of the murdered teacher were summoned to see their son's body on April 27. "There, they were shown their son's body, which was then immediately cremated. The parents were paid almost 28,000 US – a fortune to a Chinese family – then ordered not to tell what had happened," VOM claimed.

Another well-known house church leader Zhao Wenquan was arrested when about 4,000 Christians gathered to celebrate the harvest. Zhao was charged with "disturbing the social order" and with organizing an "illegal religious gathering."

About a dozen other church leaders present at the gathering escaped and are still on the run, VOM added.

Synod 2004: some samples to whet your appetite

Harry der Nederlanden

Among items on the agenda for the Synod 2004 of the Christian Reformed Church are three sizeable reports: one picks up on a venture begun some years ago – creating greater flexibility in how one gets to be an ordained minister in the CRC; another addresses a confessional matter – the description of the Catholic mass in one of the CRC's confessions, the Heidelberg Catechism, which calls it a "condemnable idolatry"; and a report that was to have appeared before Synod 2003 – a proposal to change *The Banner* from subscriber supported to church supported so that every family would receive the denominational magazine automatically.

These are substantial reports and will require some time to digest and discuss, but sometimes certain overtures brought before Synod can provoke a lot of debate too. This year Synod has before it several overtures relating to the actions of First Toronto. The council of First Toronto decided to open its offices to homosexual persons living in committed relationships and then gradually drew back from that position. Some are not happy with First Toronto nor with Classis Toronto for the way they dealt with the issue.

Also before Synod is a proposal from the Interchurch Relations Committee that the CRC join another ecumenical organization. Some time ago the CRC was ejected from NAPARC (a conservative alliance of Reformed and Presbyterian churches) for opening its offices to women, and only two years ago it joined the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The latter is a much broader ecumenical organization confessionally than the CRC has historically affiliated with. The Christian Churches Together in the USA, a very new body, is even broader than the National Council of Churches, which includes mostly mainline churches, or the National Association of Evangelicals, of which the CRC is a member. The new body brings together a cross section of evangelicals, mainline, Orthodox, Pentecostals, and Roman Catholics, so it is not based on confessional unity but wants to look for ways Christian churches of all stripes can cooperate. Some may question the utility of such membership for the average church member.

Alternate routes to ministry

Anyone who feels himself called to the pastoral ministry in the CRC is expected to meet certain requirements with regard to knowledge as well as piety and lifestyle. A candidate for the ministry goes through certain kinds of screening as he gets his education and training and after that he is subject to scrutiny on the synodical, the classical and local level. In the past, this process gained quite a bit of consistency because almost all candidates were graduates of Calvin Seminary or spent at least one year there. Over the last couple of decades it has become trickier to make sure that those who enter the ministry in the CRC will answer to intellectual and confessional standards. More people have been following other educational routes, have come to the CRC from other denominations, and have become ministers without a formal theological training. The creation of a more diversified ministry and of the office of evangelist has increased this trend.

This is good for the church, but only if standards are not sacrificed. How to make the system more flexible without abandoning standards has kept this committee busy for several years. This report has learned a few things from other Presbyterian and Reformed churches that have wrestled with the same problem. If the options are left too loosey-goosey, too many prospective pastors may seek to avoid the rigorous route of Calvin Seminary and the CRC will end up with a poorly trained and theologically diverse ministry.

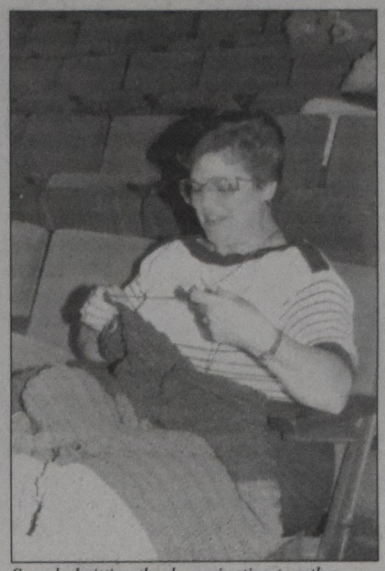
Among the mechanisms proposed by the report is the use of other Reformed seminaries to be designated by a committee as acceptable but the creation at the Classical level of special committees (Classical Ministerial Candidacy Committee or CMCC) to oversee and even train those who choose this alternate route. It suggests dropping the requirement of "need" for those who want to enter the ministry by way of Article 7, that is, without formal theological training. At the same time, the report doesn't want to open a back door into the ministry for those who can't cut the mustard at seminary. Quite a number of ministers have entered the CRC from other denominations under Article 8 (59 in the 80s and 137 in the 90s), largely because of ethnic diversity. The report seeks ways to ensure that confessional standards are not compromised in the process and that this does not become a "quick fix" for churches eager to hire a minister. The proposed classical committee (CMCC) and a system of mentoring is supposed to achieve the needed guidance.

From the looks of the three overtures, the report will raise anxieties that opening the formal educational route to other seminaries will in the long run create greater disunity in the denomination by weakening its Reformed character, and that the creation of a CMCC with extensive duties in each classis will prove unworkable. One overture suggests there may be turf wars over which seminaries besides Calvin would qualify, depending on location and orthodoxy. We might be invaded by squadrons of pastors educated in California (Fuller Seminary)! I suspect that this report, although packed with information, will end up getting recycled to return next year in a more elegant form.

An every-household *Banner*

The CRC Publications report deals with many things, including a reorganization of the Board of Publications and procedures for appointing the editor of *The Banner*. It also gives an overview of the entire publishing venture of the CRC, still very impressive. Almost half of the sales are outside the CRC, even though only 70 percent of CRC churches use denominational materials. The part of the report, however, that will provoke most discussion is the proposal to make *The Banner* an every-household magazine, supported not by subscription but by ministry shares.

The Banner has always played a central role in the denomination, the report tells us, as a place where we learn about one another and where the big issues are hashed out. It functions as a kind of town hall. But the number of subscribers has been dwindling steadily (as they have for almost every church and news magazine). From a highpoint of 52,000 subscribers in 1984 (pre-schism) it has dropped at an almost linear rate to the present number of 21,600, losing about 2,000 readers in the last year alone. In the last decades it has gone from a weekly to a bi-weekly to a monthly. It has followed all the expert advice, adopting a glossier more colorful format with shorter, newsier pieces and more pictures, providing more places for the reader to dip in – all without reversing the downward trend. In spite of drastic cuts, says the report, if the present trend continues, the magazine will no longer be viable in five years. The loss of *The Banner* will hurt the identity of the denomination.



Synod - knitting the denomination together

The report reflects on the nature and the future of denominational identity. It speaks of those in the CRC who wear that identity lightly if at all (little 'd' denominationalism) and those who see it as an important deepening and broadening current that carries us into the future as part of the movement of Christ's kingdom (big 'D'). The report opts for the latter and argues that a *Banner* in every household will strengthen that sense of identity. The Reformed Church in America has taken that route with its denominational magazine *The Herald*, and a recent survey shows that about 70 percent of RCA members end up reading about one-third of the magazine. That's pretty convincing.

However, those who don't rate denominational identity and Reformed thinking as a high priority will certainly question the high cost of such a program. I think it's worth a try.

No more "condemnable mass"

Is the Catholic mass as it is celebrated in the Catholic Church worldwide a false sacrament? That is surely what the Heidelberg Catechism means when it refers to it as a "condemnable idolatry" in Q&A 80. Two previous synods have considered dropping the phrase from the Catechism, but first the question had to be answered whether Catholic teaching on the nature of the sacrament has changed since the Council of Trent in 1562.

The report ends up telling us basically that the Catechism was mistaken from the beginning in its description of the Catholic view of the mass. Even back in the 16th century the Catholic Church never officially taught that Christ was being sacrificed all over again and that the bread and wine ought to be literally worshiped as Christ present. What the condemnation of the Catechism was directed at was the manner in which the mass was celebrated at the time, which led the people to interpret what was happening superstitiously.

The report doesn't try to erase Catholic and Reformed differences, but stretches to make the Catholic teaching more subtle. The mass doesn't deny the once-for-all efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, but it re-enacts it in a way that repeats it. It is hard to see how a sacramental act can participate in an action that is finished, but the report does not enter into such metaphysics.

Although the report says Q&A needs to be corrected, it doesn't recommend deleting it; instead, it wants to add a footnote explaining the error. I'm not sure that the idea will go over well. Are we going to keep adding footnotes to our confessions? Will they then continue to function as confessions, or will they become archival documents marking where we've been?

The Catholic Church's teaching regarding the mass is so central, shouldn't this little footnote also raise the question whether the Reformers were right in declaring the Catholic Church to be a false church? Maybe we should apologize for Luther and Calvin?

Last year synodical sessions were webcast so you could watch the debates over the Internet. The same thing was going to happen this year, but the CRC website was under construction as I wrote this and I couldn't find the address to point you to. Check crcna.org.

Politics

Second thoughts about Iraq: the cause is still just

Harry Antonides

Our goals in Iraq are being diluted by the day. There has been naiveté on our part, to be sure, and no small measure of hubris. We haven't always read Iraq right, but if we abdicate the burden and the responsibility – and the possibilities – that came with this war, our entire effort will come to grief.
(Fouad Ajami, *Wall Street Journal*)

From the looting of the Iraqi National Museum to Abu Ghraib, this has been a horrible year. The cause is still just, but to keep it moving forward, we have to reinvent the enterprise.
(David Brooks, *New York Times*)

In the past several months, the murderous attacks on coalition forces and private workers who are risking their lives to rebuild Iraqi's deteriorated infrastructure have mounted. The assassination of Ezzedine Salim, head of the Iraqi Governing Council, has complicated further the sovereignty transfer on June 30 to a yet-to-be constituted interim government.

Armed resistance has been contained but not defeated in Fallujah. The mad mullah Moqtada al-Sadr and his armed followers continue to be a serious menace in the Shiite holiest cities. The training of a new Iraqi army and security service is not going as swiftly as planned. The level of frustration among Iraqis and in America itself is growing.

A hard slog

In the midst of a long series of bad news came the revelations of degrading treatment of Iraqi prisoners by American soldiers, photographed and broadcast all over the world. Osama bin Laden and his followers could not have been more effective in discrediting the American role in Iraq. Not a few were quick to draw a parallel between Saddam's monstrous crimes and what occurred under American control.

They gloated: "How can the United States set itself up as a force for freedom and decency in light of what their soldiers did to the prisoners at Abu Ghraib?" The worst was the sniping that came from the Western press and even American politicians and pundits. Here was Senator Kennedy sneering on the Senate floor on May 10: "Shamefully we now learn that the Saddam torture chambers reopened under new management, U.S. management." You can be certain that this shameful attack on the American enterprise is gleefully trumpeted all over the Arab world, further fueling the hatred that is killing American soldiers.

American administration officials have been scrambling to do damage control. They announced that a thorough investigation is now under way and that court martial proceedings against the perpetrators have started. President Bush and Secretary of Defense Ronald Rumsfeld insisted that the Abu Ghraib abuse was the fault of a number of bad apples, who in no way represented the American military whose soldiers are doing an admirable job under immensely difficult and dangerous conditions.

The President took the unprecedented step to give an interview to a reporter of an Egyptian television where he apologized for the mistreatment of the Iraqi prisoners. But nothing the administration has said can stop the feeding frenzy of those who are out for blood.

It seems that the Bush team is weakening under the hammer blows of setbacks on the ground and the harsh criticism resulting from the Abu Ghraib disaster. They are now ready to hand responsibility over to the United Nations, which has appointed Lakhdar Brahimi to oversee and decide the make-up of the Iraqi team that will take over from the current Governing Council. But time is short, and by mid-May there was no sign of the new interim government that will be invested with sovereignty on June 30 and serve until a full-scale election in early 2005.

What is really going on? Is the Bush team caving in and now trying to get out of the Iraqi mess as soon as possible? Are the critics right that the attempt to help establish a free Iraq is a disastrous failure – a case of hubris and overweening ambition? I believe it's helpful to understand the various views of the war in Iraq, although this is admittedly a very rough sketch.

A "conflict of visions"

First, there are those, epitomized by the government of Germany and France, who are convinced that the war is wrong and that the only alternative is to settle conflicts by multilateral negotiations or containment measures. (Christian pacifists belong in this camp.) Many in Europe as well as in North America are motivated by a belief in the use of "soft power" rather than military force.

This viewpoint is vigorously articulated by a powerful media that is politically to the Left, which brings with it an automatic sense of moral superiority over against the U.S. and especially the Bush administration.

Generally, the reporters and commentators of the media have consistently refused to report on the many positive developments in Iraq. Instead, they have used their skills to place the war against terror in the worst possible light by invariably predicting disaster and endlessly harping on American shortcomings and failures. When there was good news they still turned it into bad news. Now that the news is often bad, they dwell on that alone and conveniently leave out the facts that would weaken their own take on events.

Second, the numerous setbacks experienced in the past months have caused a growing number of original supporters of the American initiative beginning to have doubts, not so much about the ideal but about the feasibility of the original goal.

Quite a few have concluded that the original goal of building a democratic Iraq is impossible and they recommend a pullout as soon as possible. Mission not accomplished. This is what made George Jonas, an unabashed supporter of Israel and the U.S. write in his National Post column on May 16: "Missing the boat has turned the Second Gulf War into an object lesson in how to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory."

Third, there are others who, while critical of the American missteps, are convinced that the cause is not hopeless. Agreeing that the situation is serious and the outcome still uncertain, they think that the Americans should stay the course and not turn their backs on all the positive things that have been accomplished. Most important is the elimination of a Stalinist regime that was a threat to its neighbors and a breeding ground for the terrorists that have declared war on the West.

The liberated Iraqis now enjoy freedom of religion, of speech, of association, and of the press, giving birth to dozens of newspapers and magazines, radio and television stations. The supply of essential services such as water and electricity has much improved. Other accomplishments are: the restoration of oil production, school attendance 80 per cent higher than before the war, elections in all major cities, fully functioning hospitals, the immunization of 400,000 children, a restored currency, the beginning of new enterprises, and the training and deployment of an Iraqi security and defence force.

Nonetheless, the continuing deadly resistance and lack of security within Iraq and the other much publicized setbacks have brought about what David Brooks has called a "crisis of confidence."

In his *New York Times* op-ed column of May 8, Brooks cautions against a spirit of defeatism and self-doubt among the "realists" of right and left. But he also insists that serious soul-searching is now called for. He says that America is shell-shocked, and is now much less confident of its power though it is facing a world of threats. Brooks believes that America needs to redefine its role in the world, because no president in the near future will send American troops "into any global hot spot. This experience has been too searing." He continues:

"Unfortunately, states will still fail, and world-threatening chaos will still ensue. Tyrants will still aid terrorists. Genocide will still occur. What are we going to do then? Who is going to tackle the future Milosevics, the future Talibans? If you were one of those people who thought the world was dangerous with an overreaching hyperpower, wait until you get a load of the age of the global power vacuum....

"We've got to acknowledge first that the old debates are obsolete. I wish the U.S. could still go off, after Iraq, at the head of "coalitions of the willing" to spread democracy around the world. But the brutal fact is that the events of the past year have discredited that approach. Nor is the U.N. a viable alternative. A body dominated by dictatorships is never going to promote democratic values. For decades, the U.N. has failed as an effective world power.

"We've got to reboot. We've got to come up with a global alliance of democracies to embody democratic ideals, harness U.S. military power and house a permanent nation-building apparatus, filled with people who actually possess the expertise on how to do this job."

Some of my friends are astonished to learn that I still, despite all the bad news, think the Americans were right in taking the initiative in freeing Afghanistan and Iraq. They ask how I can hold to that position: "Don't you know that Bush is a liar, a religious fanatic, a patsy for the oil companies, a tool of the 'neocons,' that the soldiers sent to Iraq are dupes, that terrorism cannot be defeated by military force, that the Iraqis are not ready for democracy, and things are falling apart, which should teach the Americans a lesson?" And so on.

Do not abandon friends in trouble

So let me summarize why I think that the American-led effort to free Afghanistan and Iraq from their tyrannical regimes was and is a just, honorable, and a necessary cause. I also think we should not walk away from friends who get into trouble, as the Spaniards did.

It is not true that the failure (so far) to find weapons of mass destruction proves that there was no basis for the war against the Saddam regime. In fact, everyone involved in the discussion, including the Germans and the French, were convinced that Iraq possessed a supply of biological and chemical agents

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Award

Rev. Henry R. De Bolster awarded honorary Doctor of Divinity degree

Rev. Henry R. De Bolster was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario on May 11, when he gave the convocation address at its Divinity College. We congratulate Rev. De Bolster at this honor and reprint here the introduction given by Peter George, the President and Vice-Chancellor of McMaster University.

Henry R. De Bolster has led a life that has been characterized by adventure, by courage in the face of severe adversity, and, most of all, by a clear willingness to follow God's leading in his life.

Rev. De Bolster was born in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, in 1926. As a boy, he and his family survived the bombardment of the city during the invasion by Nazi Germany. Rev. De Bolster became involved in the underground movement in the Netherlands, and aided Jewish and other people in hiding. By the end of the Second World War, at the age of only eighteen, he was the captain of his local resistance cell.

Rev. De Bolster visited the United States in 1950 and 1951, during which time he studied at the Protestant Reformed Seminary in Michigan, but in August of 1952, he emigrated to Canada. The transition to Canada was not easy. In 1953, Rev. De Bolster joined the office staff of the Steel Company of Canada (Stelco), and then in 1956 became the office manager at Algoma Steel Company in its Hamilton sales office.

In 1959, after a year of study at Knox College in Toronto, the seminary of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Rev. De Bolster, along with his wife Cobie and their four children, moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan for focused study for the ministry. He completed his Bachelor of Arts degree at Calvin College in 1960, and then continued at Calvin Theological Seminary, from which he received the Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1962, which became the Master of Divinity degree in 1975.

Completion of his formal education resulted in ordination to the Christian ministry and a number of successful pastorates in the Christian Reformed Church. Rev. De Bolster served as pastor of four congregations – Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Brampton, Second Christian Reformed Church also in Brampton, Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church in Calgary, and then Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines. Throughout his ministry, Rev. De Bolster has been active in the Christian Reformed Church as a delegate to the synod, as a member of the executive of the synod, and as a member of important denominational committees.

Rev. Dr. De Bolster with Redeemer staff

During his time in Calgary, Rev. De Bolster served on a steering committee which was instrumental in the founding of The King's University College in Edmonton. He also served as the President of the Board of the Alberta Christian College Association, a position he later held in Ontario as well.

While in St. Catharines, during his ten-year pastorate from 1971-1981, Rev. De Bolster persuaded two colleagues to join him on a committee to study the feasibility of operating a liberal arts college in Ontario dedicated to scripturally-directed learning at the undergraduate level. This began a lengthy and, at times, difficult process of getting the province of Ontario to recognize the need for such an institution. Nevertheless, this initiative resulted – eight years later – in the opening of Redeemer College.

To his utter amazement – so Rev. De Bolster writes in his autobiography, *Struggles and Blessings*, published in 2003 – he was chosen to be the founding president of Redeemer College, a position that he held for thirteen years, from 1981-1994, when he was named President emeritus, His twenty years of active work for Redeemer are recounted in his book, *Stepping Forward in Faith*, published in 2001. During this time and beyond, remarkable changes took place at Redeemer. The institution opened its doors in September of 1982 with 97 full-time and 63 part-time students offering a Bachelor of Christian Studies degree. By 1986, the student body had grown to about 250 full-time students, at which time the College moved to its present campus in Ancaster. Growth of the College has continued, until today there are over 750 full-time and part-time students from over 40 different denominations, and over 40 full-time faculty members, over 90 percent of whom have terminal degrees in their field.

In 1998, a new chapter in the College's history was began, when the Ontario government granted Redeemer the authority to grant Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees. Last year, they were authorized to grant the Bachelor of Education degree as well. In 2000, the name of the College was changed to reflect its status as a Christian undergraduate university. Redeemer University College is now Hamilton's second university,

Rev. De Bolster has been instrumental in helping to create and to realize the dream of a Christian university in Ontario that offers university-level instruction that explores the relationship between faith, learning and living. In his retirement, Rev. De Bolster continues to preach regularly and enjoys writing and attending musical concerts. No doubt his undying faith in the face of diverse challenges is reflected in his favorite adjective, "marvelous," and in his favorite hymn, "If Thou but Suffer God to Guide Thee."

Mr. Chancellor, I present to you Rev. Henry R. De Bolster, faithful pastor, educational visionary, and University College founder and president, so that you may confer upon him the degree, Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*.

Second thoughts about Iraq

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suitable for use in weapons.

The first report by David Kay last October provided plenty of evidence that Saddam was hard at work to manufacture WMDs and, that given time, he would have succeeded. The media ignored that information and only reported that no weapons of mass destruction had been found. And then they concluded that Bush had lied about the real reason for going to war – a charge that is now popularized all over the world.

Instead of arguing that not finding WMD disproves the need for the war, we should be thankful that the coalition destroyed Saddam's regime before he managed to obtain such catastrophic weapons. Would the critics have been happier if the coalition forces would have been confronted with such weapons? Are they prepared to think through the horrendous consequences of the use of such weapons?

There have been reports of the presence of small amounts of poison gasses, a thwarted attempt to use them in Jordan, and evidence of cooperation between the Saddam regime and al-Qaeda, which have been consistently ignored by the anti-American media. (Cf. William Safire, "Sarin? What Sarin?" *NYT*, May 19,04; Frank J. Gaffney Jr, "Saddam Hussein is Guilty as Charged," *National Post*, May 20, 04.)

The critics of the American-led military action in Iraq seem not to understand the true nature of those who have declared war on the West, driven by a fanatical commitment to a militant form of Islamism that brooks no tolerance of other faiths. None of those who denounce the use of American military force have said how they would counter the obscene orders of Osama bin Laden to kill Americans and their friends. What will they do when there is another 9/11 attack – or, may the Lord protect us, one even far more deadly than that?

This question should haunt all of us: How do you negotiate with people who, while shouting the praise of Allah, beheaded Nick Berg, murdered and then mutilated the bodies of four American civilians who were helping to rebuild Iraq? Why do the critics ignore this question?

The attempt to replace a tyrannical with a beneficent government in Iraq may not succeed. The fallout of that will be awful for the Iraqis. They will have been betrayed for the second time, but the implications for us will also be horrendous. I am mystified by the fact that some in the free nations appear to welcome American defeat in Iraq.

The Americans should quit apologizing, punish those guilty of mistreating Iraqi prisoners, hold their heads high, learn from their mistakes, and continue reminding us of the Stalinist cruelties committed by Saddam that terrorized the entire population and cut short the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis. They should also do a better job of publicizing the many good things that, thanks to their military leadership, have been accomplished at tremendous risk and cost, including the death of nearly 800 American soldiers.

Harry Antonides
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Fathers

To Dad – with gratitude but without mush

Ron de Boer

When I think of the concept of Dad, a slide show of images flashes through my mind – mostly from my childhood: Dad sitting on the tractor; Dad squatting beside a cow; Dad sitting in church holding the hymnal open with one strong hand; Dad peering mischievously over the edge of the crokinole board before flicking a disk off a post and into the hole; Dad dozing off while watching his beloved Leafs play on our black and white set on Saturday nights.

I sometimes think of Dad in body parts and facial expressions: the strong sunburned arms; the cracked palms of a man who strung barbed wire and picked stones; the mouth clenched on a piece of hay; the laughing eyes while playing "Showdown in the NHL" in the driveway with his boys; the serious face before Bible reading at the end of the meal; the back of his head during long rides through the country to afternoon church.

Dad out back

When I was growing up in the sixties and seventies, a Dad was a kind of weird enigma, almost like a character in a situation comedy, appearing at designated times and exiting predictably, too. Like Moms', Dads' roles were pretty clearly defined in those days. Mom was omnipresent in our house. She mostly hung out in the kitchen cooking and folding laundry at the kitchen table. Once in a while she ventured upstairs, lugging a vacuum cleaner or a stack of clean sheets to change the bed. She was always cutting something at the counter when we came into the kitchen, and it was her voice I heard from a distant land as I dozed off at night. If we wanted to know where a yellow crayon or a pair of scissors were, Mom could tell us without looking up from the sewing machine. If we were bored and wanted to know "what to do," it was Mom who had a seemingly endless list of activities for us to take part in.

Dad was the proverbial bringer-home-of-the bacon – both literally and figuratively. Whether getting a pig slaughtered or working from pre-dawn to post-dusk, he was both CEO and general laborer on the family farm. His rubber boots and overalls were long gone from the woodshed before we woke up in the morning. While his boys slept in the dark farmhouse, Dad was out in the barn with his girls – the thirty or so head of cattle he milked by himself each morning. Once in a while he came into the kitchen during the breakfast scene of our family TV show, but mostly he was "at the barn" or "across the road" or "out back" in a field ploughing, planting or harvesting.

These prepositional phrases were mysterious lands to a young boy. When Dad disappeared up the laneway in his blue pickup truck in a cloud of dust, he could be on his way to Narnia for all we knew. Our world was inside the fences of the farm in those early years. Dad was out conquering the world. When he returned with bags of feed and an empty Pepsi bottle lying on the front seat, we ran from whatever we were doing because "Dad was home," a statement that punctuated the end of a day. When evening chores were done and we were all in the kitchen playing some game or other, all was right in the world.

No sick days

Those early years on the farm were not easy for my Dad. The work, the stress, and the responsibility to provide for a growing family landed squarely on my Dad's back. He didn't enjoy the luxury of accumulated sick days wherein he could call in sick and go back to sleep; there was no one else to do his job. If his back flared up or the flu took hold of his body, the cows needed to be milked. If there were financial strains or weather and crop worries, Dad never let on. He protected us kids from talk of money worries or family stresses. These were private, adult matters.

And there were financial strains. While my parents were saving up for their first car, my Opa – who farmed next door – informed my Dad that his one-and-only tractor had broken down. Dad didn't hesitate. He used his savings to pay for the repair and put off buying the car. The same kind of generosity found his own kids. When I was a student at Dordt College back in the 1980s, all I needed to do was pick up the phone and say I needed money to buy books or food, and a cheque would be sent immediately. I know my brothers have similar stories.

Like many boys who immigrated to Canada after the war, Dad didn't spend a whole lot of time dreaming of getting an education. Out of necessity, he dropped out of school in his early teens to earn money for the family. After helping his own father work for their immigration sponsor family, Dad – knowing little English – actually biked several miles to a farm for work he'd heard was available and spent the summer there slogging bales and working the land.

We were raised on such stories. Every generation passes along stories to its offspring about how difficult life had been in "their day," but I know our parents' struggles far outweigh any struggles I've had in life. The immigration stories are real and are worth repeating to each successive generation. We were raised on a frugal budget and took nothing for granted. Because of their hard work, our generation could choose to be fully educated, can live in nice houses, fly to all-inclusive resorts every year, and feel justified in complaining when the Leafs don't win the Stanley cup.

In the early days, Dad was as strong as an ox with bulging muscles in his arms and legs. He would have made an excellent football running back had he been born one generation later and enjoyed the possibility of going to high school. I remember him throwing two 50 lb. feedbags over his shoulders and carrying them into the barn where he heaved them to the floor with authority. If you told us Dad was Superman we would have believed you. After laboring on various farms throughout his teens, Dad got a job in a factory in Owen Sound before layoffs set him on a course to buying and building up his own dairy farm.

The plot against Dad

Despite working with his hands for most of his life and despite having to learn a new language when he came to Canada, Dad voraciously read books of all kinds. Not only could he figure out how to fix a tractor, but he could also tell you details about Pearl Harbor. Just play him a game of Trivial Pursuit sometime and you'll tap into his vast knowledge of Canadian and world politics and history. Even though English is Dad's second language, he never let that hinder him from building an enviable vocabulary. And if you had a question about church order or the Acts of Synod, Dad was the guy to ask. He is one of those long-serving council members who pores over every detail of these documents. I think he would have loved to have gone to seminary and become a minister.

It might surprise you that, despite the respect we held for Dad, we began, one summer, a plot to "poop" him with a combination of green apples and our favorite milk cow, Jaws. The plot germinated one warm summer evening when we were sent to the back of the farm to get the cows for milking. As usual, we found other ways to amuse ourselves during this mundane task of herding the animals to the barn. We threw stones at birds, we whacked down weeds

Time spent thinking

Time spent thinking
Thinking about you.

Pondering your look,
And the feelings it brings

Your eyes: Gazing, penetrating,
Showing a life lived to the full
With rich experiences that draw me in
Because they reveal God's grace

Your smile gives me warmth
On an emotionally cold day

Your voice: Like a general's
It booms when it commands
Yet also gentle to the senses

Your ears: In these I see a patient listener
An understanding hearer
A man who is himself
And not afraid of others' perceptions

Your hands: Rough with a rolling "R"
Worked in like my favorite baseball glove
Tender with love and care
Ready to catch what life blows in with the air

Your legs: To walk a mile in your shoes
One would see a lot
From youthful adventures to future endeavors
Your have been firm of limb

Yet what is strength?
Is it physical power that carries us through?
Time, it seems doesn't show physical mercy
But does that make one weak?

Life's strength is in the spirit
And your spirit is strong.

Philip Koole – for his father

Culture

with sticks, and when apple season began, we employed the little hard "greeners" in numerous ways. We threw them at each other; we held bets who could hit a distant tree; we saw how many corn rows far we could chuck them. And sometimes we bit into them to remind ourselves just how unbearably bitter they were. That evening, we decided to load up our pockets with apples and use them on the cows in case they got it in their heads to head to the pond before continuing to the barn. They didn't, but we decided to use them to speed up the loping Holsteins, anyway. We aimed for the white spots; we aimed for black spots; we aimed for horns and knees.

It worked! The cows moved faster. Except Jaws. Jaws started to eat the apples off the ground. The next day, when Jaws saw us coming to the field with a shirt full of green apples, he ran over to us and let us stuff his mouth with them. Just before we got to the barn, Jaws lifted his tail, and let go with a stream of manure that must have shot five feet behind his hooves. My older brother looked at me with this very evil grin and immediately hatched a plan to "poop" Dad during milking. He got the bright idea that if we fed Jaws a half hour or so before milking, we might be able to see Dad "get it" while he walked back and forth behind the cows emptying milk into pails.

But Dad somehow outfoxed us. Jaws never got his timing right, but succeeded in puzzling Dad with his sudden bouts of diarrhea, which he displayed prominently on the wall behind his stall. One night, when she got a little too friendly with me while I washed off her udder, she swiped my hat off my head and proceeded to chew it like tasty cud. When Dad pried Jaws' mouth open to retrieve my hat, he noticed the green apple bits in Jaws' molars. He chewed us out, and forbade us to feed the cows anything but hay and sileage from then on.

I'm thankful

Like many Dads, our Dad can't be captured in one story or in a few paragraphs in a magazine. What makes a good Dad are a whole lot of small things for which anyone blessed to have a Dad or a Dad-figure should be thankful. I'm thankful for my Dad. I'm thankful he kept to his promise not to tell Mom when he caught my brother and I smoking in a back field when we were kids; I'm thankful he taught me how to skate on a frozen pond with the help of a kitchen chair; I'm thankful he was there to save my life when I ran over myself with a tractor; I'm thankful he never got angry when I broke really expensive farm machinery because God had no plans for me to be a farmer. I'm thankful he made sure our household was Christ-centred.

And I'm thankful he took risks in life. At age 44, when anyone in any profession might be considered in his prime, Dad sold the farm. He and Mom moved us all to a city four hours away. Among other reasons, they wanted my younger brother and I to attend a Christian high school, something they felt deeply about. We're glad they moved. So are our kids. My brothers and I all met our wives there!

Today, my parents continue to move up in the world – all the way to the fourth floor of an apartment building where they recently moved. Like the Robins in the trees outside their balcony, they are building a new nest. This is a new beginning for them. But more than likely not their last.

For men of my generation who have fathers from the old country and who were raised in Calvinistic households and churches, it's sometimes difficult for fathers and sons to express themselves openly to one another. We all know we love each other – why mention it, for Pete's sake! Grown men don't say those sorts of things-it says so somewhere in one of the CRC catechisms, doesn't it?

Well, Dad, happy father's day. Know that your sons do love you and are grateful for the many sacrifices you've made over the years.

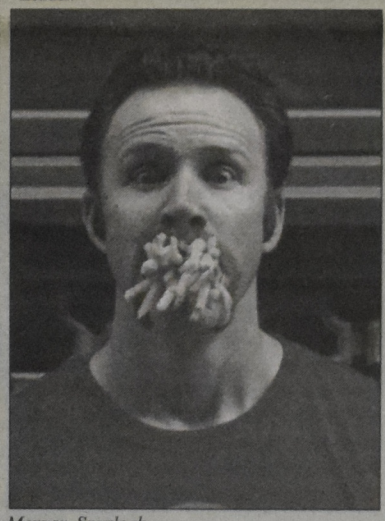
Socially reprehensible behavior

Elbert van Donkersgoed

Whatever happened to hitchhiking? As a young man I enjoyed hitchhiking. High school basketball and volleyball games and practices were followed by "thumbing" the 21 kilometers home. For two years I hitchhiked from the family farm in northern Huron County to the college of my choice some 500 kilometres away in the United States. Was I caught up in a passing fad?

Last week at a conference in Ottawa, a talk by pollster Allan Gregg quelled that notion. Hitchhiking fell victim to North America's growing aversion to risk. Gregg's examples were smoking and drinking while driving. Over a quarter century later a public consensus has emerged censoring these behaviors.

Gregg sees a pattern. First we label a behavior risky. Second, we study the risky behavior and propose solutions. Third, the media over-reports the risk. Finally, a public consensus emerges that brands the risky behavior socially reprehensible. There are lots of examples: driving without a seatbelt, cycling without a helmet, hockey without a face mask.



Morgan Spurlock

"Super-size me!"

The food chain, too, has its examples. Cholesterol and trans fats expose consumers to involuntary risks – risks that are invisible and ingested. Studies are being done. Solutions are being proposed. Some media frenzy has bubbled up. And branding has begun with the emergence of cholesterol-free cooking and trans fat-free snacks.

The food chain is on the cusp of a whopper of public censure. First, we label a behavior risky. The promotion of junk food and fast food has been cited as a cause of obesity. Second, we study the risky behavior and propose solutions. A World Health Organization report links junk food to obesity. The Ontario government calls for pop-free schools. Third, a media feeding frenzy starts, and be forewarned, it is coming to a movie theatre near you!

McDonalds in 1955

But wait. Let me be clear – the emerging public censure will not be aimed at those who eat junk food. The promotion of fast food is about to become a reprehensible behavior. Morgan Spurlock's documentary: "Super Size Me," in theatres since early May, is a biting critique of the behavior of fast food companies.

On the surface, Morgan Spurlock's documentary tells the story of a 30-day binge on McDonald's burgers and fries. His rules: a) eat three meals a day at McDonald's; b) eat every item on the menu at least once; and c) if asked to super-size the meal, say yes. Spurlock becomes lethargic, moody, and beefs up 25 more pounds while his doctors warn him of liver and kidney damage.

The real story is McDonald's life-long marketing strategy – get them while they are young with clowns, toys, playgrounds to top off every fun-filled day. A promotion strategy that hooks our kids on foods linked to obesity – a reprehensible behavior.

Morgan Spurlock writes a daily blog about his experience promoting his documentary and the message that those promoting junk food are responsible for obesity: http://blogs.indiewire.com/morganspurlock/.

The World Health Organization and UN Food and Agriculture Organization report which links junk food to obesity can be found at www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/trs916/en/.

The UK's Food Standards Agency report "Does Food Promotion Influence Children? A Systematic Review of the Evidence" can be found at www.foodstandards.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/foodpromotiontochildren1.pdf.

Elbert van Donkersgoed P. Ag. (Hon.) Is the Strategic Policy Advisor of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, Canada. Corner Post has been heard weekly on CFCO Radio, Chatham and CKNX Radio, Wingham, Ontario since 1997. To be added to the electronic distribution list of Corner Post send email to elbert@terracoeur.com with SUBSCRIBE as the message.

Ida's story: 100 years of two-way faithfulness

Wynne Vandezande

On February 8 of this year over 120 family members gathered at the First Christian Reformed Church of Sarnia to celebrate the 100th birthday of Mrs. Ida Johanna (Penning) de Jong with a service of thanksgiving and an open house. Mrs. De Jong – let's call her Ida, hoping she's not offended by the informality – still lives in her own home with help from a caregiver, who comes in every morning and evening to help her get dressed and to prepare evening meals. Her oldest daughter, Tena comes in about five days a week as well to do the laundry, take her shopping, to appointments and to church. A recent assessment by a social worker concluded that because she can manage quite well on her own, Ida does not yet qualify for a nursing home.

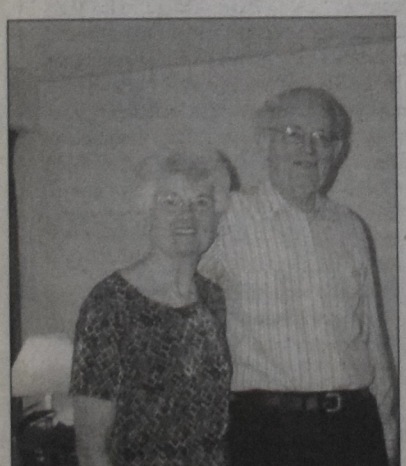
From Germany to Holland

Ida ended up marrying a Dutch farmhand, but she was born Feb. 10, 1904 across the border in Ostfriesland, Germany in the town of Pogum. In those days the border was quite porous and people on both sides of the border spoke the same language.

Children were born at home with the help of midwives and most girls of working families went to work after completing elementary school. Ida attended a Lutheran Christian School, although she and her family belonged to a Baptist church.

She loved reading when she was young and would have loved to continue her education after grade school, but World War I came along and she was sent away from home to go to work for a farmer. Although the farm where she worked as a girl just coming into her teens was only a short walk from home, she was expected to live there doing housework, haying, gardening, washing the milk cans and so on. She was allowed to go home every other weekend to visit her family.

After the end of the war Ida worked at home on the family farm for a couple of years, for an aunt, and as a mother's helper in the nearby city of Leer. The reparations imposed on Germany caused hardship, horrific inflation and unemployment in Germany in the 1920's, and many young people crossed the border into The Netherlands to find employment there. The Netherlands had remained neutral during the First World War so the economy was in better shape. Many Dutch were more sympathetic to the German cause than to England, which had treated the Boers badly in South Africa.



Wynne and Gerald Vandezande

A dependable Christian husband

Ida found work on a Dutch farm near Roden, not far from the city of Groningen, where she did many of the same chores she had learned to do in Germany. Many German young people returned home when the German economy began to recover, but after working in The Netherlands for a year, Ida met a young man, Benne de Jong, who had the makings of a dependable Christian husband.

After working on the farm at Roden for three years, Ida found work in town, first in Aduard and later in The Hague, working for a Jewish engineer. She did housework and learned to cook, even boerekool. In the spring and the fall of each year Ida and her sister Nettie were given a week off to visit their family in Germany.

Benne, her husband-to-be, emigrated to Canada in 1927 and sent for Ida a year later. Her father, who was an alderman, had to be persuaded to sign the emigration papers. Her parents were very sad, sure they would never see her again. And although both lived to age 82, they never did. In January 1928, Ida, 24 years old and all alone, boarded an ocean liner to England, where she began her 14-day storm-tossed trip across the Atlantic.

Fruitful in Canada

After landing in Montreal, it was a two-day trip to Chatham. From there a three-hour trip on the "milk train" took her to Mooretown, where she had work lined up with a Mr. De Leeuw. His wife had died and Ida had to care for his two children.

A few weeks after landing in Canada, Ida and Benne were married during a regular Sunday service in the little white United Church.

For some time the young couple worked and lived with different farmers, Benne doing field work and Ida doing cooking and cleaning. She remembers one of the farmers reading the Bible in English to them to help them learn the language. Ten months after they were married came the first child, Tena, soon followed by another, Jacob. It was the beginning of the family they had always dreamed of. But then followed Marguerite, Helen, Winnifred, Jessie, Betty, Mary, Allan, Wilhelmina, Ida, Nancy and, number 13 – Lillian. It was a fruitful, faithful, frugal, hard-working life but also fun-filled, for everyone learned to give and receive love from one another.

Ida welcomed each child as a gift from the Lord, but at times family life was overwhelming, but never chaotic. Ida attributed the order in the home to Benne, who she says was a good organizer.

In 1938, after having worked for a number of farmers, Benne bought a 100-acre farm in Mandaumin. The house was large enough to hold all eight children with lots of room to romp. There was a barn, a granary, pig pens, a garage, animals and acres of land to work, but no conveniences for the mother and housewife. Ida had to do the wash by hand on a washboard, using a hand-turned wringer to squeeze out the water. Lamps and lanterns had to be filled, trimmed and cleaned; wood fetched for the wood stove; mud in the spring and the fall; lots of snow in winter; cows to feed, fetch and milk; haying, stooking and threshing; and many mouths to feed – family and farm hands. There were city folk to entertain, counsel and feed; school friends, boyfriends and girlfriends to welcome and sometimes lodge. But Ida was a good teacher and could delegate many jobs. "Oh, don't look ahead and wonder how you can stook or hay another 10-acre field; just look back over all the work we've accomplished. Isn't it beautiful?"

The children would look forward to a treat halfway through. Chores were often turned into games. And on Saturday night all the shoes were polished to a high shine and set in a row, ready for Sunday.

"Mom never lost faith"

Wynne Vandezande, one of Ida's daughters, writes: "Mom never lost her faith and often stated it was all she had to hang on to. It gave her strength, courage and hope.

"Both mom and dad are/were very faithful, dedicated, Christ-like parents with all their humanness. They chose to find God's direction in their life and exemplify a Christian lifestyle. They did not depend on themselves but began each new day with prayer, Bible reading and a short meditation. No meal was eaten without asking a blessing, giving thanks and seeking God's spiritual guidance. And no day ended without personal prayer.

"If a member of the family got up grumpy or complaining, mom would sing a song: *Ere you left your room this morning, did you think to pray; in the name of Christ our Savior. Did you ask for loving favor, did you think to pray?* If church services were offered twice on Sunday, 'It is our privilege and obligation to attend,' she would say."

Now Ida is content to attend only one service on Sunday unless there's a special service. She does not shrink back from challenges. When the latest hymnal come out, many people complained that it was too heavy and that there were too many new tunes. But Ida had her daughter Mary take her out to buy a keyboard so she could practice the new tunes at home. She seized every opportunity to learn and to grow in God's grace. When Ida was mending, sewing or knitting and Benne was reading *The Banner*, she'd ask him to read it aloud so she could benefit even though she didn't have time to read.

At age 100 Ida needs a cane to get around, but get around she does – to church, to family get-togethers, Super Seniors, dinners, appointments. She still joins the De Jong clan at the cottage, goes to baby showers, weddings and anniversaries, for she is now the matriarch of a huge clan.

At Ida's 100 birthday celebration, Wynne said this on behalf of the entire clan: "Mom, you asked us not to praise you or focus too much attention on you. You said, 'Other people have birthdays and don't have church services, dinners and open house. I'm just another old woman who has a birthday.'

"Therefore, I've tried to put this into context. We give God the praise, honor and glory for your and dad's life of loving, faithful service. We truly have been blessed with your presence. We see and experience many expressions of Jesus in you – love, patience, compassion, graciousness, kindness, generousness, perseverance.

"Thank you again, mom, for being you and allowing God to use you to be the person God meant you to be. You've been a tremendous blessing to your family, church and community in which God placed you.

"Thank you, mom! Your children arise and call you blessed!"

[The story was revised here and there by the editor.]

My father had never lost his temper with us, never beaten us, but we had for him that feeling often described as fear, which is something quite different and far deeper than alarm. It was that sense which, without irreverence, I have thought to find expressed by the great evangelists when they speak of the fear of God. One does not fear God because He is terrible, but because He is literally the soul of goodness and truth, because to do Him wrong is to do wrong to some mysterious part of oneself, and one does not know exactly what the consequences may be.

... Joyce Cary, *Except the Lord*

Vietnam's atrocities against Montagnards confirmed

Special to Compass Direct

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam (Compass) – In spite of monumental efforts by Vietnam to minimize and cover up their brutal repression of demonstration attempts by the Montagnard ethnic minority this past Easter, consistent information is emerging that confirms atrocities.

During Easter weekend, April 10 and 11, Montagnards in Vietnam's Central Highlands sought to call attention to the harsh injustices they suffer at the hands of communist authorities and ethnic Vietnamese settlers. However, Vietnamese security forces attacked the demonstrators, causing many deaths, injuries, arrests, and the flight of many more to unknown locations.

Village in Vietnam's central highlands

Montagnards, who are largely Christian, have long been the victims of severe harassment and persecution at the hands of the Kinh majority. This ill-treatment intensified after previous demonstrations held in 2001. One church leader reported to Compass, "They [state officials] have promised to deliver to us great hardship and pain. They specifically promise us fear and revenge. Day by day the animosity between the races grows. It is virtually impossible to see how this can now be resolved."

Reliable sources from Vietnam have produced a list of names, along with birthdates and village addresses, of 11 Ede people in seven Dak Lak provincial villages who were arrested. Sixty-three others were listed as "killed, badly wounded or known to be in hiding." The list also covered articles that were confiscated, including small farm tractors, fuel oil, water pumps, gold and cash.

Another document, apparently prepared not long after the Easter events, reported the deaths of 205 people in seven other Dak Lak villages. In four of those villages, usually inhabited by a total of 2,200 people, only 12 people remained. The fate and location of the missing is not known; some may have now returned.

The same document reported that over 500 small farm tractors, used in transporting Montagnards from 30 villages to the demonstrations, were completely destroyed.

Verification difficult

On May 17, the Montagnard Foundation Inc. (MFI), which Vietnam blames for the unrest, released a 12-page report giving details of the repression. The MFI report named 37 people killed during the Easter demonstration. Four of the dead were described as Jarai from Gia Lai Province and the remainder as Ede from Dak Lak.

The MFI claims it has information that another 239 people, as yet unidentified, were also killed. Numbers in the report issued by MFI immediately after Easter weekend appear to have been exaggerated. However, MFI spokesmen believe that information still emerging will confirm their earlier claim that at least 400 people were killed that weekend.

"The verifying of deaths is a huge challenge," a respected Vietnam watcher explained, "but it is looking more and more certain that the number of confirmed dead will exceed 100.

"Vietnam's admission of only two deaths is ridiculous. However, it will prove very hard to provide forensic or testimonial evidence because Vietnam is engaged in a rapid and thorough cleanup of evidence, and is now firmly rejecting calls for independent investigations. Further, authorities are going to extraordinary lengths to prevent news from getting out, and to prevent official visitors such as diplomats and journalists from talking freely to people."

Government misrepresents visits

Visits to the region by U.S. diplomats, a Vatican delegation, and a team comprised of the Canadian, Norwegian, Swiss and New Zealand ambassadors were completely controlled by Vietnam officials. A handful of Montagnards were selected to speak with the foreign visitors. However, local sources say they were threatened with severe consequences if they so much as hinted at the truth of what happened.

After each diplomatic visit, Vietnamese state journalists published manufactured quotes saying the diplomats had complimented Vietnam for its enlightened minority policies. In each case, the diplomats took strong public exception to the misrepresentation.

Vietnam's Kinh majority have a long history of racist attitudes towards the Montagnards and other minorities. The minorities are subject to discrimination through the illegal seizure of their lands, along with poor access to education, health care, jobs, government relief and small loans. Those who do have access to public schools are often driven out of the classroom by the ridicule and abuse of fellow students.

There were several accounts of cruelty to Montagnard children during the post-Easter crackdown. One report stated that a number of third grade Montagnard schoolgirls were attacked on the road in Buon Poc. One of the girls was stabbed to death, while another was "humiliated" (a euphemism for rape) and then stoned to death. A similar fate befell a schoolgirl in Buon Dha Prong.

Another source reported that those attacking the Montagnards in a certain location killed a number of children first, saying this was a pre-emptive action to stop future demonstrators.

Some human rights organizations are concerned that democratic governments seem unwilling to address these atrocities, apparently because they lack forensic "proof." It appears that Vietnamese authorities have worked hard to prevent such proof from surfacing.

A Montagnard pastor told Compass, "If all foreign countries incline their ears toward Vietnam and continue to believe its lies, then it is absolutely certain that, bit by bit, the Montagnard people will be totally exterminated."

After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides

Toothpaste and boiled carrots

During the summer of 1983, I drove my bike down to the Bay, slapped down about $25 and bought a Slazenger Cougar wooden frame with nylon strings. From my perspective, it was the best racquet out there. I decided that the Slazenger was the only racquet to buy. It was handsome, sleek, cool, trustworthy.

But all of those adjectives ignored one basic fact: the racquet was a piece of junk. Up to a couple of years ago, I insisted that Slazenger made the world's best tennis racquets. Then someone gently pointed out to me that that particular racquet was an el cheapo piece of junk. The frames were notoriously lousy and nylon strings were considered the cheapest in quality. In sum, that first racquet that I fell so deeply in love with was a pathetic joke.

The story of my first tennis racquet is in fact a story about an all-too-common flaw in my character – the insistence on absolute truths that are based solely on emotional nostalgia.

Take carrots as another example. I had always assumed that boiling vegetables for 15 minutes was the way to go. Then I tasted my first crisp, lightly cooked carrot. That's when I realized that the Dutch are to gourmet cuisine what the Brazilians are to ski jumping.

The way in which we experience things for the first time has an indelible effect on our psyches. Some deeply entrenched but unfounded beliefs can take a lifetime to deconstruct.

It's possible that of all things that make us interrogate our convictions, marriage is the most compelling. In our six years of marriage, Monica has taught me that it's okay not to arrive ten minutes early for appointments, that brushing your teeth before going out in the evening isn't such a bad idea, that pancakes don't have to be an inch thick to be good.

From me, she's learned.well, errr, umm....

Anyway, back to the point. Nostalgic traditions feed many of our day-to-day decisions and feelings about things: from political allegiances to toothpaste brands to sports team preferences. There's certainly no shame in that – I love my Colgate toothpaste and Nissan pick-up trucks. The danger lies in allowing deep-rooted traditions to keep us from learning from other people and respecting their ways of doing things.

Take the traditional after-church grumblefest, for instance. Maybe you're familiar with this type of scene: a group of churchgoers sits around a living room coffee table, white coffee cups perched on their laps.

"Well, I don't know why the Lord's Supper had to be done that way," Oom Menne might say. A murmur of agreement ripples through the room.

"And why do we need another offering for the seafarers?"

"Don't you mean the seamen?" asks Tante Oukje, who then blushes at her faux pas. The teenagers in the room start to titter, their ears burning with the exertion of repressed laughter. Father frowns. Awkward silence. Everyone takes a sip of coffee.

I love my Dutch heritage, but the branch of Christianity that Dutch immigrants have brought here is certainly not immune to the trappings of tradition. Dare I say we're even more susceptible to them. It takes an extra effort to appreciate and learn from the ways that other Christians live and worship.

I will continue to eat dropjes and drive Nissans – partly because of nostalgia but mostly because I like them. But I hope that in some small way, I can be more aware of times when I allow my fondness for tradition to rule over common sense.

Tim Antonides is teaching in Surrey, B.C.

Relationships

BuildingTrust
Vicky Van Andel Ed.

From Jenny to Dr. Phil

A woman who made quite an impact on my life is a teacher named Jenny Wilting. Jenny is in her eighties now and lives somewhere in Alberta. She has no idea she influenced my life because I never told her. I met Jenny twenty years ago when I attended a workshop she gave on healthy relationships. She has written several books on interpersonal relationships in nursing.

In this particular workshop she shared some ideas about improving relationships with other people. She emphasized that the ideas and beliefs she was presenting were her own. "You don't have to believe them, or accept them for truth. Talk about them and form your own ideas," she said. We were divided into small groups and each group was given one of her beliefs to discuss.

Jenny's beliefs

These are some of Jenny's beliefs on how to relate to people in mentally healthy ways.

- If unhealthy behavior in another person has been a problem for you for a long time, it is your lack of maturity that is the problem, not the behavior of the other person. The person who is upset is the person who needs to change. Problems are not solved until we realize who in the relationship really has the problem and should do something about it.

- It is not the unpleasant experiences that cause you to have negative emotions but your irrational thoughts about these experiences. What we tell ourselves about our experiences causes our problems. For example, we may not like it when someone always arrives late. We can be angry because we think people should never be late (irrational belief) or we can accept the fact that people are imperfect and do come late (rational belief). We need to think of an action that would motivate the person to stop coming late. Another example. Consider your reaction to your friend who shows up two hours late for dinner. How you react depends on your thoughts while you were waiting. If you thought your friend might have had an accident, you would worry. If you thought s/he had stood you up, you would be angry or hurt. Our feelings are a result of our thoughts. How you feel is your issue.

- We are most likely a problem to the person who is a problem to us. It is more helpful to ask ourselves how to make sense of the behavior of another person than to blame that person. We need to try to influence change in the behavior of the other person.

- We need to be self-accepting, and accepting of others. We need to accept ourselves and others as human beings of value and worth. We tend to evaluate ourselves and others and be non-accepting.

- People behave the way they do for selfish reasons, even the person who spends a lot of time doing things for others. Even though people may appear self-sacrificing, they really do what they do for personal benefit. Being selfish is healthy. It is unhealthy to convince others that we are unselfish and make sacrifices because it places debt on them and leaves the expectation they have to express gratitude.

Selfish reasons

The bottom line in Jenny's beliefs is that we need to take responsibility for our own feelings and behavior and should not blame others for the way we feel. Another belief of Jenny's that was fascinating for me was the idea that we do things primarily for selfish reasons. As a well brought up Christian Reformed woman I was quite amazed at that statement. I talked to Jenny about it and asked if she believed in God and in the Bible. Rather than answering my question, which I fully expected her to do, she smiled and said like a very good teacher, "Tell me what is un-Christian about these beliefs." Somewhat taken aback I mentioned that we need to love our neighbor and that selfishness is not a good thing. Jesus was not selfish when he allowed himself to be sacrificed on the cross. In response Jenny suggested that even Jesus did what he did for personal reasons. "His life and death had a purpose. Jesus knew that and carried out this purpose. Think about it." I have been thinking about it for twenty years.

How we see the world shapes our feelings

My memory of Jenny was triggered by a recent article in the *Edmonton Journal* about Albert Ellis a psychologist who developed rational emotive therapy. Ellis challenged such renowned psychologists as Freud and Rogers with his thinking. I met Ellis about 15 years ago when he visited Edmonton. His ideas interested me but his foul language repelled me. Ellis believes it is better to solve emotional problems by confronting irrational thoughts and changing them, rather than to lie on a psychiatrist's couch delving into the past. He believes that our twisted unrealistic thinking drives our emotions.

Negative feelings are the result of not seeing the world as it really is. We see it the way we have created to see it. It tends not to jibe with reality. We can change the way we feel by changing our view of the world and ourselves. This upfront approach is also used by Dr. Phil who asks people if they want to hear the honest truth now or six months from now. Or who in response to defensive behavior will say, "Well, is it working for you?" The psychiatrist David Burn in his popular book *Feeling Good* also works with this theory, describing a process of healing from depression by learning to recognize and change the automatic irrational (destructive) thoughts that cause negative feelings.

I asked Jenny how she developed her beliefs and where they came from. She told me they were based on the ideas of Albert Ellis. Slowly over the years I learned to understand her beliefs better although I never quite figured out the task of Jesus in this context. I learned that I am responsible for my own feelings and not other people, no matter how I feel and that I need to handle my feelings in healthy and mature ways and cannot blame others for them.

Jenny's belief that we do things for selfish reasons has motivated me to scrutinize my motives for the things I do. I agree with her that in all the things we do there is an element of personal satisfaction. In accepting that, we place fewer expectations on other people allowing us to give unconditionally and not for a pat on the shoulder. We give out of gratitude to God. Once in a while I do have to remind myself of these things very consciously though. Especially when I feel hurt.

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via fax at 1-780-473-0970, or e-mail at : vickyv@telus.net

A 'grave' mistake

William L. Vander Beek

An elderly widow I knew in Grand Rapids was eager to be gone from this life. Why? "I want to be with Pa," she told me every time I visited her. As a Christian, she believed that when she died, she would be re-united with her last husband, "Pa".

I cannot disagree with her. How much do we know for certain about what is called "the intermediate state," that is, the time between our death and the resurrection on the last day? Not much.

One thing we do know is, that when we die, we will be buried (At least, that is mostly what happens among us yet).

That "state" of being in the grave has its own mysteries. On the one hand we say that only our body is in the grave, our mortal flesh, decaying over time, because there is no real life in it.

And yet we put on a marker or gravestone, "Here lies So-and-so."

But is there a person there?

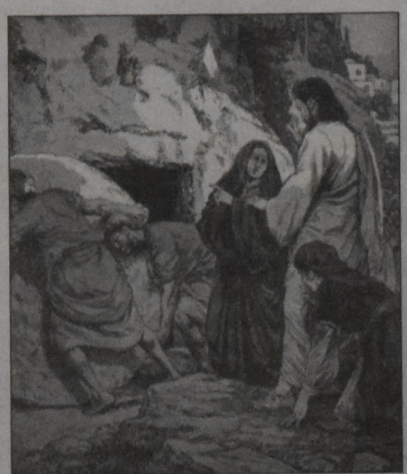
Yet, it is not wrong to keep the name of the person attached to what is in the grave. Did you ever think about the story of Jesus raising Lazarus. Jesus did not look up to heaven and say, "Lazarus, come forth!" He stood right by that tomb, and, as I picture it, he looked at that tomb, maybe even pointed at that stone blocking the entrance. He addressed the person there and said, "You, Lazarus, time to come out!"

And Lazarus, now again a living person, did.

When we try to describe being in the grave, we say that only the body is in the grave. The other "part" we call soul, and we say, 'The soul is in heaven.'

I'm not going to confuse you by telling you how, being of reformed faith, we dispute the idea of "the immortality of the soul." And yet we know and believe that those who "die in the Lord" are alive.

Having your body in a grave – is that not a gruesome thing? No doubt you can find some expressions here and there in the Old Testament which picture the grave in very dark colors. For example, in Isaiah 38 King Hezekiah, who had been healed from sick-



ness says (vs. 18): "For Sheol cannot thank you, death cannot praise you, those who go down to the Pit cannot hope for your faithfulness."

But also read what Job says (Job 19:25-27): "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes – I not another." And he concludes, " How my heart yearns within me!"

Earlier Job had said some sad things about death, too. But here with this amazing prophecy his faith soars above the limited visions of the Old Testament. Faith, for him, for us, does not dwell gloomily on the intermediate state but looks forward beyond it in wonderful expectation.

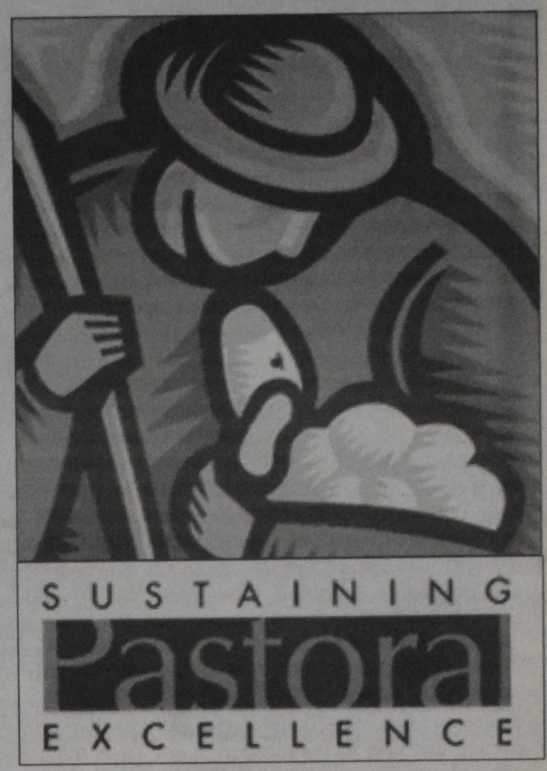
And that takes us to the apostle Paul. The important certainty for him is that "whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Rom.14:9). And like the widow I mentioned, he, too, makes us concentrate our longing on meeting the one we love, when we die.

Whom? Not Ma, or Pa. For Paul the most important one we want to be with is Christ: "To depart – parting, how sad; but listen – to depart *is to be with Christ*."

That longing makes the apostle's mind

Continued on p. 17...

Spouses in pastoral ministry: their role



Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen

When the Christian Reformed Church North America (CRCNA) was awarded a Lilly Endowment grant of nearly $2 million in September 2002, the funding provided the momentum for an initiative with the potential to transform local churches and their pastors through "Sustaining Pastoral Excellence." Since the program began working with pastors two years ago, one area that participants have identified as important to them is the role that spouses play in pastoral ministry.

The role of spouses in ministry

Pastors consistently report that spouses make a significant contribution to the health of their ministry. Opportunities for pastors to develop close friendships with those outside of the congregation or with other pastors may be limited. As a result, the role of the spouse as friend and supporter becomes even more important than it is for individuals in other professions. Rev. Moon Bae Kim, a pastor at Korean Grace Christian Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan, explains that pastors rely on their spouses to be "a good friend. A pastor needs to be encouraged and share opinions and burdens."

The role of spouse as friend is important, echoes Rev. Ron Fisher, a retired pastor living in Waterloo, Ontario. Throughout their more than 30 years of ministry, Ron and Gerry Fisher say they have learned that the spousal relationship is key to being effective as both a person and a pastor. "The biggest contribution my spouse makes to my ministry? It's contributing to my health and happiness," says Ron Fisher.

Congregational expectations

It is also true, however, that ministry can damage spousal relationships. In other careers, there are few – if any – expectations of a spouse's role in an individual's professional responsibilities. Churches, however, often have high expectations for a spouse's involvement in the congregation's ministry. While some spouses embrace this wholeheartedly; others simply do not wish to be involved at that level or have other responsibilities that may make it difficult for them to take on that role.

Rev. Joan DeVries, of Clarkson CRC, in Mississauga, Ontario, says those expectations can sometimes create difficulties for spouses. Being one of the first generation of female pastors in the Christian Reformed Church, she feels her gender has worked to her advantage when it comes to the role of her spouse.

"I feel being a female in this way has been an advantage," she explains. "People in the congregation don't have as many specific expectations of my spouse [because he is male], so my spouse has been able to find his own way without pressure from people saying 'You should do this' or 'You should do that.'"

A sounding board

Spouses often serve as "sounding boards" for pastors, and that, too, can create tensions in relationships. Joan DeVries and her husband, Frank, were married for 17 years before she entered full-time ordained ministry. "It has been kind of a journey about what I can and cannot share," she says. Beyond the need for confidentiality are issues related to compassion for one's spouse, says DeVries. She recently attended a mentoring conference with other pastors from throughout the Christian Reformed Church, and this issue came up repeatedly during discussions.

"There have to be limits on sharing for the sake of the spouse," she explains. "Some of the pastors I talked to were feeling sorry for their spouses who listen to so much. The pastor can talk to the spouse, but who can the spouse talk to?"

DeVries says to get around relying on a spouse as one's sole sounding board, pastors need to have other resources to whom they can go to share their thoughts, feelings and pain. "I have developed other resources for myself such as a pastoral support group, a group of women that meets with me monthly or every other month for talking and prayer; or, if need be, I can see a counselor who can give me a different perspective on things."

Ron Fisher agrees that while relying on a spouse to provide a listening ear can be beneficial, it has its downside, too. "It is good in that she knows me inside and out," he says. "It is not good in that it is hard for her always to be objective."

The Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) Program is playing an important role in creating helpful external resources for pastors, resources with the objectivity and emotional distance not always offered by a spouse. SPE has provided important funding to help local pastors participate in peer groups, mentoring programs and a recent mentoring conference, says Rev. Duane Visser, director of Pastor-Church Relations for the Christian Reformed Church. "Through the SPE program, we have encouraged pastors to build relationships with other pastors. Having these other relationships is important. It reminds the pastor and the spouse that they don't have to carry this burden alone. There are others that can be a resource for them."

Seminaries also have a role to play in helping pastors and their spouses learn appropriate boundaries for sharing and listening, says Moon Bae Kim. While seminarians' course work covers listening, counseling and issues related to sharing people's pain, spouses often don't have opportunities for formal training in these areas. "It would be helpful for seminaries or denominations to offer more seminars for spouses," he says. Calvin Seminary provides opportunities for spouses to sit in on some courses, he says, and this can be very helpful.

There is little doubt that spouses play a key role in helping pastors deal with stress. However, there are limits to how much a spouse can do. Ron and Gerry Fisher point out that an important role of the spouse in addition to "just being there" is to point the pastor in the direction of professional help when it is needed. "It is important to remind your partner that it is time to talk to someone else, perhaps a trusted professional," says Gerry Fisher.

"A spouse can detect a pastor's restlessness, change of emotion or language," says Moon Bae Kim. These are signals that stress levels may be reaching the breaking point. He points out the need to create some separation between home and ministry in order to protect the mental health of both the pastor and the spouse. "If we cannot, in some sense and in some aspect, separate ministry from home, both pastors and spouses can hurt each other's mental health."

The Role of the Congregation

Churches play an important role in ensuring that spousal relationships contribute positively to – rather than being damaged by – pastoral ministry. Ron and Gerry Fisher recall various things congregations have done to contribute to healthy family relationships. "We have been blessed with gift certificates to restaurants, with interns to take some of the load and with a year's sabbatical for a time of healing and renewal," says Ron Fisher, who points out that it is also worthwhile for congregations to set aside funds for a pastor to see a counselor when it is needed.

Churches can help the pastor and his or her spouse keep the home "a safe haven" says Moon Bae Kim. The home should be a place for "family time." He adds that a congregation's expressions of love to a pastor's family and especially understanding the importance of pastor's family contribute to strong and happy relationship between spouses and families.

"Congregations should help the pastor put boundaries on their time," adds Joan DeVries. "Wise congregations realize that is not the best use of a person's talents to demand excessive time away from spouses and families."

Because of irregular working hours and high levels of evening and weekend work, it is easy for pastors' families to be shortchanged. Congregations can avoid this by encouraging pastors to set aside time for professional development and support, designate specific "days off" and limit the number of evenings a pastor is away from the family. Writing these kinds of things into a pastor's contract gives the pastor "permission" to take advantage of these opportunities without feelings of guilt, says DeVries.

...continued from p.16

almost jump over his time in the grave, when he shouts: "To die *is gain*!" (Phil.1:21) Can you imagine? GAIN!"

And so we must be careful what we put on our obituaries. You must especially be careful with big words when English is not your mother tongue. I have been to quite a few funerals where the program announced some one's "interNment." Why not just say "burial"?

To interN a person is; to confine or detain a person: usually one who is considered an "enemy alien." Dutch citizens were interNed in what is now Indonesia during the Japanese occupation; they were made internees in camps. Is that what burial is like? No way!

The right word is: to inter (without that N at the end), and that simply means: to put into the earth (Latin: terra). (Shakespeare had Mark Anthony say at the burial of Julius Caesar, "The evil that man do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones."

So to call one's burial an interNment, that is a "grave" mistake.

William Vander Beek is a CC reader who lives in Langley, B.C., where he is neither interned nor interred.

Mainly on Money

Oil prices and religious war

Just in case you don't remember what happened in 1973, I'll refresh your memory. That was the first oil-shock when crude increased dramatically, courtesy of OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Two things then happened. North Sea oil came on stream, reducing dependence on OPEC, and people stopped wasting the stuff, well Europe anyway, where gasoline costs $2.00 a liter – so stop complaining – with the result that today the Western World produces goods with 50 percent less energy than 30 years ago.

Now three things are happening. The expiry date of the North Sea bonanza is coming closer; oil there is dribbling rather than gushing. The world's machinery, in spite of conservation, has grown so much that it now uses about 30 percent more oil than three decades ago. And, experts say, the Saudi oil cushion is flattening.

Somehow Iraq figures into this. The people in the White House, more knowledgeable about oil than democracy, have been itching to get at the Iraqi reserves, not expecting that now its main export is not crude oil but crude and gruesome pictures. As if Iraq has not suffered enough. Ever since the first Gulf War, and even before that, its people, with mostly good and a few bad apples like us, have been deprived of a normal existence. Having oil in one's soil is just as much a curse as winning a $50 million lottery.

It seems that finally the American people are becoming aware that the Iraqi misadventure fought some 10,000 km away from home, is not worth the cost. US public opinion is tuning in to common sense. Nothing is more wasteful than war, wasteful in terms of lives lost and maimed, wasteful in terms of physical destruction, wasteful in terms of atmospheric pollution, wasteful in terms of anger and lasting psychic pain, wasteful also for the economy as war creates uncertainty and uncertainty creates higher oil prices. Oil, as we well know, is the life blood of our economy. War makes oil bleed away so that the economy needs ever more transfusions – new oil discoveries – to keep the 'body' from dying. Believe me, oil prices will stay high, and may go higher even in the absence of more bad news from the Middle East. And with more bad news, we'll be looking at a real crisis – one that could do a lot of economic damage. Each $10 per barrel increase in crude prices is like a $80 billion tax increase on North American consumers, inflating prices while pay remains flat.

A blessing in disguise?

So Saudi Arabia has promised to pump up production. Promises are cheap. To deliver on this pledge may be impossible, one reason why oil prices are creeping up, but not nearly as high as 20 years ago when it doubled and tripled almost overnight. If this were to happen now....

Even with the current small increase, forecasters at Goldman Sachs – a large investment house – estimate that the global economy will expand 3.5 percent this year, instead of the initial forecast of 4.6 percent. It may not be the last revision.

Between tension in the Middle East and self-confident noises from OPEC, there is little hope that prices will come down soon, according to Fatih Birol, chief economist of the International Energy Agency. "Market fundamentals don't suggest any easing – on the contrary," Birol said. According to this agency's report, any sustained $10 extra in the price of oil would mean higher unemployment, inflation and budget deficits across the world and cost the global economy at least $255 billion (US) within one year. The euro zone, highly dependent on oil, would suffer the most among developed economies, with an estimated cut to its GDP growth of half a percentage point.

As usual we have been blind to the future. Cheap and abundant energy lulled us to sleep. Since 1990 we have assumed that it is more economical to make or grow things at one end of the world and consume it at another. We fly flowers in from South America, grapes from South Africa and strawberries from wherever. Shoes, everything, now come from Asia, especially China. All that is either going to stop or will double in price, forcing us to – fortunately – consume local produce and so help local growers and make things closer to home. Ships, airplanes, trucks, our cars, of course, all will be affected by higher energy expense. There simply is no substitute for oil. In the 1970s greater efficiency eased our dependency, but now we've exhausted a lot of that potential, so whatever OPEC charges we pretty much have to pay it. Or do without. Perhaps a blessing in disguise.

Kerry and Nader?

While I am writing this, I am in the United States, where I saw a picture in the *New York Times* of Ralph Nader, leader of the US Green Party, and John Kerry, the Democrat presidential contender, not quite embracing each other, but very friendly just the same. I am here in John Kerry Country, a village-type community within the City of St. Paul, Minnesota, where the houses are custom-designed, built on University land, and only those employed by that institution of higher learning can buy. Indeed, a rather exclusive enclave, and predominantly Democratic. No sooner had we emerged from our favorite coffee shop there on our first day, or I was approached by an anti-Bushite who offered me 'John Kerry for President' bumper stickers. I took two. So if you see a silvery Jetta carrying a Kerry sign, it's me.

Nader, as you might know, was the spoiler who prevented Gore from winning the presidency, now almost four years ago. This time, with the battle lines within the USA even more sharply drawn, Kerry – and I presume Nader as well – does not want to see a repeat of 2000. Nader called Kerry quite presidential. Is he a candidate for Vice-President?

Rumsfeld, Dumsfeld

September 11, 2001 changed the course of America. Then the world sympathized with the people of the USA. When, a year or so later, Iraq was invaded against the sentiment of most, America basically stood alone, having managed to alienate many. Since then things have not gone well. So many of the reasons for this war offered by its prime promoter were reversed later, that I am inclined also to reverse the initials of "the best secretary of defense the US ever had" from Donald Rumsfeld to Ronald Dumsfeld, responsible for the messy Iraqi aftermath. This is the man who said: "Truth ultimately finds its way to people's eyes and ears and hearts," words which may yet come to haunt him. When the truth emerges regarding the torturing of Iraqis, it may yet cost him his place within the Bush regime. Many are now honing for his head, including some Republican senators.

Among the world's publications, the pro-American *Economist* has been quite emphatic. It writes that "it is a matter of profound regret that Donald Rumsfeld, America's defense secretary, has not yet had the grace to make one gesture of contrition that everyone would notice, by submitting his resignation." Referring, of course, to the prison pictures in Baghdad, for which he might well be responsible.

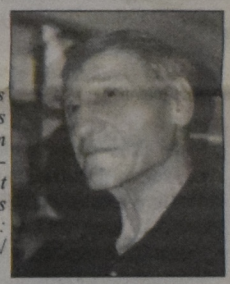
Here is how I see things. America regards itself as God's chosen country on earth. Europe is scolded as old and decadent, unable to make decisive changes, bureaucratic, mired in over-regulation. America, on the other hand, is the sole super power, energetic, young and purposeful, the culmination of history, the City on a Hill, something other countries imitate for their own good. The authorities here interpreted September 11 as resulting from the hate and envy of people who stubbornly refused to admit (as George Bush angrily complained) 'How good we are.'

Religious war

The enemy, by the way, makes the same claims: they too are convinced of their moral superiority, with a divine mandate of their own. So, lo and behold, at this late hour of history, the world witnesses a religious war, with all the cruelty religious wars are known for. Who is winning this war? Nobody. In a religious war everybody loses. Terror has multiplied, evident in the prison scandal, which has become an American moral nightmare. No one in Washington expected this, least of all the pious people in power. They had counted on a morally coherent expedition, and even expected to turn a profit as a divine given since, as Paul Wolfowitz noted, "Iraq is floating on oil." Oil, by the way, made America what it is today, and will also determine its future. The country collapses without it. No wonder that the high price of oil has even pushed Iraq off the front page.

Iraq was supposed to give the US the triumph it was denied in Vietnam. It now looks that Iraq has doubled the defeat. What this will do to the collective psyche of this great nation is the question that will haunt this country for the remainder of the decade and possibly beyond, with consequences for all. After all, America dominates the world. With only 5 percent of its population, it consumes a quarter of the globe's output. Should its way of life be negatively affected, the economy everywhere will be in deep trouble. A Kerry victory cannot change this, even if Ralph Nader of the Green Party joins forces with the Democrats, a now more likely prospect.

My wife and I are in the Mid West – tornado country – to celebrate with children and grandchildren birthdays, graduations and concerts.



Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ont. His website has been updated, now including all past columns as well as other writings: www.geocities.com/hielemab

Please Note

SUMMER SCHEDULE

Issue Dates	Deadlines
June 21	June 8
July 5	June 22
Aug 2	July 20
Aug 16	Aug 3
Aug 30	Aug 17
Sep 13	Aug 31

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Christianity Today 2004 Book Awards

Christianity Today announced its Book Awards for 2004 and we pass them on to you to guide you in your summer reading. The second book listed is honorable mention.

Apologetics/evangelism

Going Public with Your Faith: Becoming a Spiritual Influence at Work, William Carr Peel and Walt Larimore (Zondervan)

Seeker Small Groups: Engaging Spiritual Seekers in Life-Changing Discussions, Garry Poole (Zondervan)

Christian living

My God and I, Lewis B. Smedes (Eerdmans)

Rumors of Another World: What on Earth Are We Missing? Philip Yancey (Zondervan)

Biblical studies

The Resurrection of the Son of God, N. T. Wright (Fortress Press)

The Gospel of John: A Commentary, Volumes One and Two, Craig S. Keener (Hendrickson)

1 Corinthians, David E. Garland (Baker Academic)

The church/pastoral leadership

The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations, Dan Kimball (Zondervan)

Preaching That Speaks to Women, Alice P. Mathews (Baker)

Christianity and culture

Doubts about Darwin: A History of Intelligent Design, Thomas Woodward (Baker)

Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West, Lamin Sanneh (Eerdmans)

Fiction

A Bearer Of Divine Revelation, Lawrence Dorr (Eerdmans)

Touches the Sky, James Calvin Schaap (Baker/Revell)

History/biography

Jonathan Edwards: A Life, George M. Marsden (Yale University Press)

For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery, Rodney Stark (Princeton University Press)

Missions/global affairs

On Kingdom Business: Transforming Missions Through Entrepreneurial Strategies, Tetsunao Yamamori and Kenneth A. Eldred, eds. (Crossway)

Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians Are Not Being Told About Israel and the Palestinians, Gary M. Burge (The Pilgrim Press)

Spirituality

Searching For Home: Spirituality for Restless Souls, M. Craig Barnes (Baker/Brazos)

Embracing the Mysterious God: Loving the God We Don't Understand, James Emery White (InterVarsity Press)

Theology/ethics

Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context, Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee (InterVarsity Press)

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A woman in her mid 50's (dutch born, CRC background, divorced for 10 years) would like to meet a Christian man. Please respond to: Christian Courier **File #2743**
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Home address: 163 Emerald Street
Southampton ON N0H 2L0
519-797-3125

Born: June 21, 1914, Burgum (Fr)
The Netherlands

John (Johannes) Rauwerda

With thankfulness to God,
we hope to celebrate
the **90th Birthday** of our Dad,
Opa and Great-Opa

"I will sing of the Lord's great love forever;
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations." Ps. 89:1

An **Open House** will be held on Monday, June 21, from 2 - 4 p.m. at Shalem: 3010 - 51 Street S.W., Calgary AB T3E 6V8

Address: #308, 2850 - 51 St SW
Calgary AB T3E 6S7

Gezocht

Fam. Wiebe de Boer
Jellie v d Naald uit Doezum Nederland zoekt fam. Wiebe de Boer. Geemigreerd in 1952 naar Toronto
Kinderen: Jantje-Siebrand-Nanno-Auke-Feikje en Corrie.
Telefoon: **0594-659163**

Wanted

A **Bible commentary** of Patrick, Polus and Wells or a Calvin commentary.
Email to ejbosch@rdnet.nl

Please note
Christian Courier's
issue dates for the summer.
June 21, July 5, August 2,
August 16, August 30

Anniversaries

With praise and thanksgiving
for God's faithfulness in their lives,
the children and grandchildren of

ALBERT AND MARTHA TAMMING (nee **LINKER**)

are pleased to announce the celebration of their
45th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY
on June 10, 2004

May the Lord continue to bless your lives richly.

Bonnie & Chris – Jessica, *Grimsby*
John – Katie-Beth, Annalise, Mark, Daniel, *Owen Sound*
Joanne & Bruce, *Toronto*
Gary & Rose – Jason, Spencer, Lauren, *Stoney Creek*
David & Arlene – Timothy (with Jesus), *Strathroy*

"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Colossians 3:17

Home address: 196 Adelaide St, Strathroy ON N7G 2V5
e-mail: tamming~skynet.ca

Hollandscheveld 1944 — May 28 — London 2004

With joy and thanksgiving to God we wish to announce the **60th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

HARM AND NELLIE BLOEMBERG (nee **Vander Pol**)

"For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:39
Great is God's Faithfulness!

With love: Anne & Sid Vander Heide, *London*
Ralph & Nancy Bloemberg, *London*
Nela & Mike Couchie, *London*
Corrie Bendall, *London*
Margareth & Roger Baker, *Ailsa Craig*
28 grandchildren & 10 great-grandchildren

Home address: 1 Andover Dr Apt 109, London ON N6J 4H2

50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

July 1, 1954 — July 1, 2004

ROLPH AND FREDA WESSELSON (nee ***Hofstra)***

With thanksgiving to God we hope to celebrate Dad & Mom's Anniversary with an **Open House** at Covenant Christian Reformed Church
410 Lansdowne Ave. Woodstock ON

***Saturday* July 3, 2004, 2:00 - 4:00PM**

Grace & Henry Zomer, *Ingersoll*
Amy
Cassandra
Nicole & Dan Wikkerink
Sarah

Anita & Peter Cox, *Ingersoll*
Michael
Erin
Adam
Tristan

Paul Wesselson & Trish Szlachetka *Ingersoll*
Zachary Wesselson
Ashley Wesselson

Lloyd & Elaine Wesselson, *Embro*
Jason
Alyssa
Ryan

John Wesselson, *Kitchener*

"... If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here." Exodus 33:15

Home Address: Box 314, Embro ON NOJ 1J0
BEST WISHES ONLY

1954 — July 2 — 2004

Psalm 100:3

DIRK AND GERTIE ROOK

Are pleased to announce the celebration of their

50th Wedding Anniversary

Thank you Mom and Dad for your love, and congratulations from your children and grandchildren:

Harriet & Ray Johnston *Kingston ON*
Bill & Linda Rook *Pembroke ON*
Harold & Monique Rook *Carp ON*
Gerry & Linda Rook *Cobden ON*
Henry & Waveney Rook *Pembroke ON*
Keith & Trudy Rook *Iroquois ON*
Brian & Laura Rook *Drumbo ON*
5 grandchildren, 7 step-grandchildren & 3 step-great-grandchildren

An **Open House** will be held at the Micksburg Community Centre, 2769 Micksburg Rd, Saturday July 3, 2004 at 1:30 to 4:00 p.m.
Best Wishes Only

Address: RR3 2620 Snakeriver Line
Cobden ON K0J 1K0

1954 — June — 2004

We give thanks to God for his faithfulness as we celebrate the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents

BOB AND TINIE VERSTEEG

"In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:6

Congratulations from your children:

Alfretta VanderHeyden
Aileen & Bill Hern
Marion & Steve Burn
Art & Jenny Versteeg
Tena & Bill Groot Nibbelink
Albert & Marj Versteeg
Shirley & Gerry Vandenberg
Nancy & Jim Vrolyk
Margy & Arnold Wiegersma
Rob & Jeannette Versteeg
& your 28 grandchildren

Address: RR 2, Gorrie ON N0G 1X0

Obituaries

Mussel, the Netherlands — Ottawa, ON
January 8, 1907 — May 11, 2004

JETSKINA HOOLWERF (nee **WUBS**)

went home
to be with her Lord and Savior.

Predeceased by her husband Dirk.
Beloved mother of
Joyce (John de Wilde),
Holland Landing, ON and
Bert Hoolwerf (Rita), *Ottawa, ON*
Oma will be lovingly remembered by her 9 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

Funeral service was held at Calvin Chr. Ref. Church, Ottawa ON on May 14, 2004,
Rev. Ken Gehrels officiating.

Correspondence address: L. Hoolwerf
300 Atlantis Ave, Ottawa ON K2A 1X6

Metslawier, Holland — Brampton, Canada
April 16, 1920 — May 11, 2004

I Corinthians 13

With sorrow we released

JENNIFER TIMMERMANS-WALDA

into God's loving arms on May 11, 2004, at the age of 84.
Our comfort is that she is released from suffering and is now singing praises to her Lord in heaven.

Dear wife of Andrew
for almost 62 years.
Preceded into glory by
her oldest son Bruce in 1998.

Cathy & Cye, *Thunder Bay ON*
Karen & Erik – Carmen, *Kamloops BC*
Steve, *Thunder Bay ON*
Barbara, *Barrie ON*
Mient & Harriet, *Ottawa ON*
Christina & Steve – Joshua, Jonah
Mike
Matthew
Tina & Eckard, *Toronto ON*
Omar & Bess – Andrew
Sy
Niiba

A memorial service took place on May 15 at Holland Christian Homes, Brampton, with Rev. Praamsma officiating.
In lieu of flowers, donations to the Canadian Cancer Society would be appreciated.

Address: A. Timmermans
35 Kingknoll Dr KT 204
Brampton ON L6Y 5G5

In Memoriam

In loving memory of

WYNAND VANDER SCHEE

who passed away one year ago on May 31, 2003

Much loved husband of
Femmie Vander Schee (nee Hoekman)

Also much loved father of
Louise & Tony Van Wyngaarden
Anne & Arnie VanderHeyden
Evelyn Cole
Rhonda & Jeff Leaist
and 15 grandchildren

Always in our hearts

"The Lord is my Shepherd." Psalm 23

Home address: F. Vander Schee
23 Rowanwood Ave
Brantford ON N3S 7B7

Classifieds /Job Opportunities

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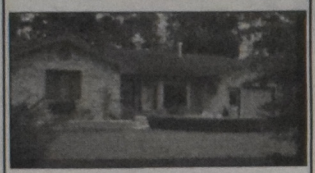
Nico & Alice Jukema,
PH:519-485-2101
Fax: 519-485-2103
email: jukema@lilbitcountry.ca
web: www.lilbitcountry.ca



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Call 416-251-6649 (after 6 p.m. weekdays)

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Please contact Tracey Geerlinks for more info. at **905-791-7644** or **dtgeer@idirect.com**

For rent **by night or weekly**. **Cochrane**, Northern Ontario. Cozy, comfortable **cedar log cabin**. 2 bedrooms, bathroom with shower, kitchen & living room. For more information, contact Ada Struyk at **705-272-6169** or email: **cmstruyk@puc.net**

2-bdr park model trailer in Bible camp on **Lake Erie**. Close to Pt. Dover, On, available either July or Aug $300 wkly, covered pool, games, wkly concerts etc... n/s, n/p. For more information,
Ph: **905-637-6541**

Job Opportunities

YOUTH DIRECTOR/HALF-TIME:
WANTED, a loyal servant, who is gifted in youth ministries and whose love for God and his people is present in his/her everyday walk. This self-motivated and enthusiastic person will use his/her gifts to direct, lead and motivate today's young people into tomorrow's leaders. This position at **St. Thomas First CRC** will be available in July 2004. For further information, or to send your resumé, contact: **First CRC**
PO Box 22039, 204 First Ave, St. Thomas ON N5R 6A1
or email: **firstcrcstthomas@canada.com.**

MARANATHA CRC
of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada,
a congregation of 480 members, is seeking an
ASSOCIATE/YOUTH PASTOR.
This individual would be an ordained minister,experienced with youth, willing to lead our church and community outreach church programs with hands-on involvement.
For a detailed job description, or more information, contact
Frank deWalle, Search Committee Chairman.
e-mail: adewalle@telusplanet.net.

BETHLEHEM CRC, THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO
is a caring community of believers whose vision is "Embracing God to Touch Your Life." It is our desire as a church to share God's love with a broken and hurting world. We seek a full-time pastor to join our 240 member congregation.
For further information, or to obtain a copy of our church profile, please contact
Abraham Drost, Committee Chair, phone **(807) 473-1968**
or email **adrost@shaw.ca**
or check our web-site at **www.baynet.net/~bethcrc/**

The board of trustees of Christian Reformed Huron Campus Ministry – Guelph, ON is seeking a

campus minister

to serve the University of Guelph community beginning in the spring of 2005.

Candidates may be ordained or non-ordained, should possess a graduate degree or equivalent experience, and have a passion to engage people in contemporary culture from a Reformed theological perspective.

Application deadline is Sept. 3, 2004.

For a position description or further information, or to apply by submitting a curriculum vitae and two letters of reference, contact:
Huron Campus Ministry – Guelph, Keith Knight
26 Blueridge Court, Guelph ON N1H 6S6.
E-mail: kknight@presbyterian.ca

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Seeking Employment

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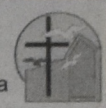
Can be contacted at
519 677 4073,
Fax 519 627 6922.
Ask for Michael.

ALLISTON CRC OF ALLISTON ONTARIO
in the heart of potato country is looking for a **pastor** ready to take on the challenge of pastoring our congregation in a fast-growing community. We are a congregation of 83 families, close to Toronto but far enough away to still maintain our small town flavour. We have several thriving ministries and are involved in our community. Inquiries can be made to:
John Van Loenen 905-936-2550
chair of council, or
Aris DeBruin 705-435-5317
Chair of the Calling Committee

EMMANUEL HOME



an expanding Christian Assisted Living Residence for Seniors in Edmonton, Alberta
is seeking a **half-time Chaplain**
to facilitate the spiritual nurturing of residents and their families, and staff. [This half time position has the potential of growing with the upcoming expansion of the Home.] Responsibilities include developing a true community of caring as well as directing spiritual care. Qualifications include having a love for Jesus and for seniors, excellent leadership skills, the ability to understand Dutch, and being a team player. Education requirements include a post-secondary degree; chaplaincy training at an advanced level is preferred. Job description available on request. Please send inquiries to Vicky Van Andel at
vanandel@emmanuelhome.ab.ca
or by fax to 1-780-473-0970.

Christian Labour Association of Canada
Benefit Administration Office

Due to the continued growth of CLAC's benefit plans, the Grimsby Benefit Administration Office is currently seeking a candidate for the following full-time position:

Benefit Plan Administrator

The successful candidate will be a highly motivated self-starter and possess a degree in business administration or the equivalent. In addition, this individual will have excellent communication skills, both oral and written, as well as strong interpersonal skills. Preference will be given to those knowledgeable in the areas of finances, insurance and pension benefits. Knowledge of Microsoft Office (especially Word and Excel) and DataEase computer programs would be a definite asset. We offer a competitive salary and benefit package.

Applications should be addressed to:

Peter Van Duyvenvoorde, General Manager
CLAC Benefit Administration Office
89 South Service Rd, PO Box 219
Grimsby ON L3M 4G3
Tel: (905) 945-1500
Fax: (905) 945-7200
pvanduyvenvoorde@clac.ca

All applications will be held in confidence.

Check out our website for job opportunities recently advertised in the Christian Courier at: www.christiancourier.ca

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Call: 416-461-1207
Write: Christian Reformed Extension Fund
45 Harriet St, Toronto ON M4L 2G1
Fax: 416-465-6367

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

June 4 Appreciation Dinner for Jake Vriend, principal, John Calvin Christian School, **Guelph**, ON. After 26 years of faithful service, Jake has taken a position at Stoufville Christian School for the fall. Dinner to be held at The Arboretum Centre, University of Guelph, Friday at 6 p.m.Tickets $34. contact Lyn Marfisi at 519-822-0993 for more info.

June 9 Hollandse Dag First CRC, **Kingston**, ON Spreker, Rev. Jacob Kuntz. " Samen met alle heiligen " For more Info call (613)546-5615

June 9 Hollandse Dag 10 a.m. at the **Moorefield** Community Centre. See ad May 24 issue.

June 9 Retirement celebrations for Mr. John DeVries at **Hamilton** District Christian High School, 7:30 pm. – 9 p.m. Congratulatory messages can be sent to: jdevries28years@hdch.org

June 26, 27 Fellowship CRC in **Brighton**, Ont. will be celebrating 25 years of God's faithfulness. A special service will be held on Sunday. For more information please call 613-475-3836

June 26, 27 Retirement events for Henry Boehm, at John Calvin CRC, **Truro**, NS. For more info: 902-895-3540 or rachelboehm@ns.sympatico.ca (See ad, May 24 issue)

June 27 Heritage Service, Zion CRC, 409 Adelaide Ave. E. (at Central Park), **Oshawa** at 3:00 pm. Rev. John Veenstra, "De hemelvaart van Christus." A Social hour will follow the service.

July 1 Frisian Picnic, 11a.m. at the Pinehurst Conservation Park, **Paris**, Ont., Highway 24A

July 1,2,3 The Granum Christian Reformed Church, **Granum**, Alberta, will celebrate its 100 year anniversary. See ad this issue for details and contact information.

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–Pastor John Zantingh

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Other times call 905-393-0754 for appointment

261 Stone Church Road East, Hamilton, Ontario
email: office@wellingstone.ca www.wellingstone.ca

"Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations" – Psalm 90:1

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Rosanne van der Woerd
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FRISIAN PICNIC

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HOLLANDSE DAG
Wednesday, June 9
First CRC
Kingston, Ontario
Spreker
Rev. Jacob Kuntz
" Samen met alle heiligen"
For more info
call
(613)546-5615

THE GRANUM CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
will celebrate a "100 years of God's Grace"
July 1 -3, 2005.
All former members and friends are invited to come and celebrate with us. Some of the Festivities planned are as follows;
Friday, July 1- Combined Church Picnic With Nobleford.
Saturday, July 2- Banquet and Program.
Sunday July 3- Worship Services: Speaker: Rev. David Feddes
For more information please contact:
Clara at (403) 687 - 2131 or Patty at (403) 687 - 2144
or: Granum CRC, Box 245 Granum AB T0L 1A0
or: granumcrc@hotmail.com

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News

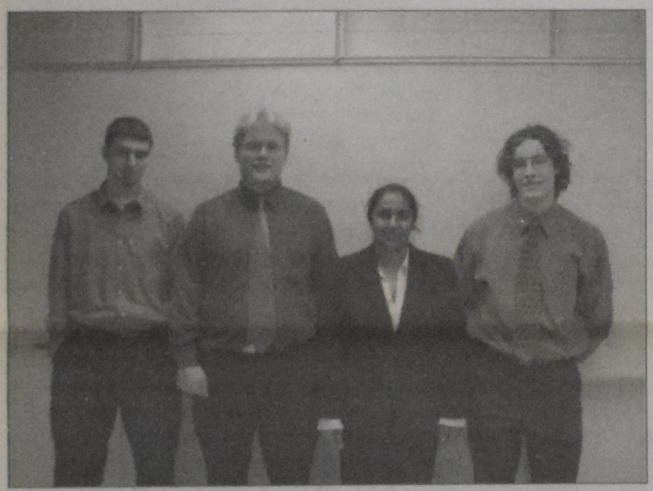
Calvin student designs solar blanket for environmental center

Myrna Anderson

Grand Rapids, Mich. – It took two years to research, finance, design and build. It will provide at least 60 percent of the energy for the newest building at Calvin College. And it will educate visitors about renewable energy sources.

It is the solar energy project for Calvin's new Helen and Vincent Bunker Interpretive Center, in the words of engineering professor Paulo Ribeiro: "the most significant engineering design project in the history of the college engineering program."

And its creator, Jordan Hoogendam, is a college student.



In fact, the solar energy project was the senior engineering design project for Hoogendam (second from left), a native of Cobourg, Ontario, and three of his fellow students – Clinton Reitsma (far left) of Whitby, Ontario, Sam Schoofs (far right) of Grand Rapids and Sharon Abraham (second from right) of Sugar Land, Texas.

Those who designed and built the new Bunker Center agree that without Hoogendam and his team the new building, slated to open this summer and be dedicated this fall, would not be solar-powered.

For his part Hoogendam says simply: "I really, really wanted to see a technology like this displayed in a large way at Calvin."

Thanks to the efforts of him and his team it will be.

Visitors to the Bunker Center first will notice on the roof a large photovoltaic array, which will supply the lion's share of the center's energy. Meanwhile a Web server attached to the system will monitor solar intensity, wind speed and direction, temperature, the system's power output and the facility's power consumption. That server, in turn, will interface with an interactive educational kiosk located in the Bunker Center and with a special Calvin website – making information about renewable energy available to multiple audiences.

The photovoltaic project is one of several environmentally friendly features which qualify the building for a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold rating from the U.S. Green Building Council. And it represents the culmination of a long-time dream for Hoogendam.

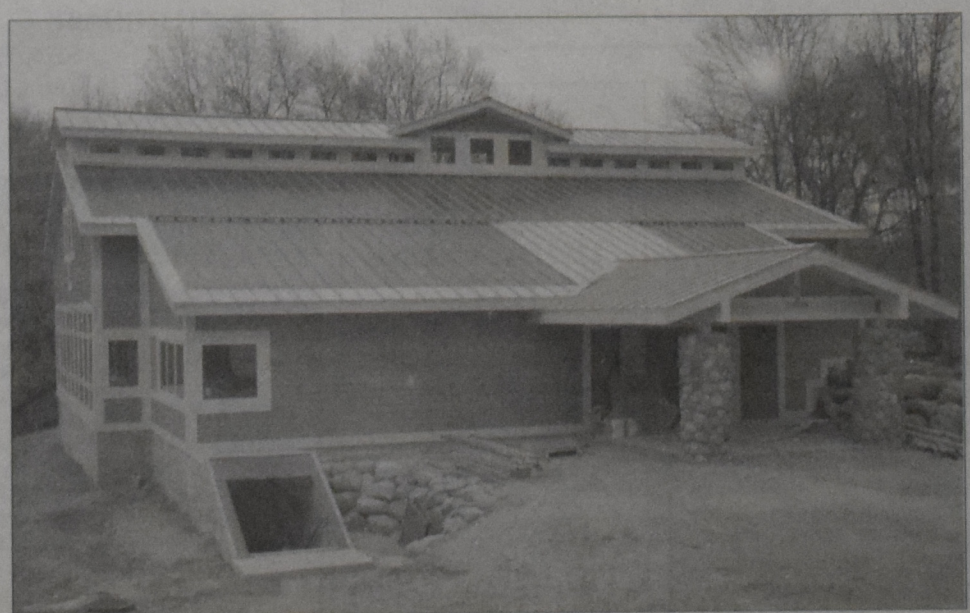
Already in 2002 Hoogendam was part of a student team which presented solar technology options for the Bunker Center to college architect Frank Gorman. At the time money was an impediment to putting the technology in place. So Hoogendam partnered with Lois Konyndyk, Calvin's director of foundation relations, and Ribeiro in engineering to write a grant proposal to the State of Michigan's Energy Office, hoping to get funds to make solar energy his senior design project.

In July 2003 the energy office awarded the student project $91,000. The college then added $17,400 to that total. Funding secured, Hoogendam was determined to make the photovoltaic system his senior engineering design project. The engineering department, however, thought the project was too ambitious for Hoogendam's team to tackle.

"People were worried," remembers Chuck Holwerda, the department's electronics expert who worked most closely with the students. However, as college architect Frank Gorman says: "Jordan Hoogendam makes a practice of exceeding expectations."

Last fall Hoogendam pulled his team together with Reitsma customizing the computer program that handled all the behind-the scenes data querying, storage and retrieval, Abraham engineering the information kiosk and Schoofs handling the Website. During the 2003 Christmas break, the entire team glued the photovoltaic array to the Bunker Center's metal roof.

Hoogendam also attended numerous construction meetings as the liaison between the student team, the college architect, the construction team and everyone else involved in the building of the Bunker Center.



The Bunker Interpretive Center

With the Bunker Center due for dedication on September 10, 2004, and the student team due to graduate on May 22, Hoogendam finally is able to step back and look at what has been accomplished.

"There's a system here at Calvin," he says, "that provides energy without polluting the environment – and will do so for the next 20 or 30 years. And we've left an educational tool that future classes could use in the engineering, geology and biology departments."

Hoogendam now is eyeing graduate school in Canada (where his wife will be teaching) and a future in academia or the renewable energy industry – after he puts some finishing touches on his senior project.

"We don't get our final check from the state until everything is up and running," says biology professor Randall Van Dragt, director of the Ecosystem Preserve. "So I know that Jordan is going to be hanging around this summer to make sure everything will be operating."

Health care reform should be based on values, say Canadian churches

(Press Release) – The Ecumenical Health Care Network launched an on-line petition May 14 to the federal Minister of Health calling for broad public participation in establishing a health care Covenant for Canadians. As a federal election approaches, a health care Covenant would set out guiding principles for reform of the health care system based on Canadians' most deeply held values. Every Member of Parliament will be asked to endorse the petition.

When the Royal Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada, chaired by Roy Romanow, was holding hearings in 2002, the network proposed a *Health Care Covenant for All People in Canada* based on principles of solidarity, community, equity, compassion and efficiency. The network said these values under-gird medicare today and should take priority over a market-driven approach to health care.

Mr. Romanow was enthused by the concept. When the report of the Commission was released in November, its first recommendation was for the government to establish a covenant as a statement of Canadian values and a guide for the necessary reform of the health care system. At the end of January 2004, the leaders of the five largest Christian churches in Canada wrote to Prime Minister Paul Martin, encouraging him to delay no longer on the establishment of such a Covenant. The on-line petition can be found at www.ccc-cce.ca.

The Ecumenical Health Care Network convened a forum on Parliament Hill on the future of health care on Feb. 28, 2002, bringing together more than 100 religious leaders, church-based health care providers and professionals, politicians and representatives from community and labor organizations. They concluded that health promotion is not only about curing symptoms but also requires confronting the causes of suffering and injustice in society. The churches have been calling for no further privatization of health care, the establishment of homecare and pharmacare programs, and the reform of the primary care system.

The Ecumenical Health Care Network is a project of the Commission for Justice and Peace of the Canadian Council of Churches.

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